



## **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 22 January 2025** at **10.00 a.m.** to transact the following business:-

1. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024 (Pages 5 - 16)
2. To receive any declarations of interest from Members
3. Chair's Announcements
4. Leader's Report
5. Questions from the Public
6. Petitions
7. Report from the Cabinet (Pages 17 - 24)
8. Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic - Report of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel (Pages 25 - 32)
9. Review of Members' Allowances Scheme - Report of Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Independent Remuneration Panel (Pages 33 - 114)
10. Adoption of the County Durham Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan - Report of Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth (Pages 115 - 284)

11. Updated Local Code of Corporate Governance - Report of Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 285 - 330)
12. Overview and Scrutiny - Six Monthly Update - Report of Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (Pages 331 - 346)
13. Change to Date of Future Council Meeting
14. Motions on Notice

### ***Councillor R Crute to Move***

Durham County Council warmly welcomes the decision made by the new Government to recognise the injustice faced by former mineworkers and their families. In reaching the recent landmark decision to hand £1.5 billion back to the Mineworkers Pension Scheme the Government has ensured that former pit workers who powered the country for generations will at last get the just rewards for their labour - and from Labour.

However, another significant injustice towards the miners stays unresolved, and that relates to the behaviour and tactics deployed by the police at Orgreave during the 1984/85 Miners' Strike.

Durham County Council believes that several issues relating to events at the picketing of Orgreave on 18 June 1984 are of both local and national importance.

As a result of policing tactics at Orgreave during the 1984/85 Miners' Strike Durham miners and their families were adversely affected by the events of that day, including instances of wrongful arrest, false imprisonment, loss of pension rights, family breakdown and termination of employment.

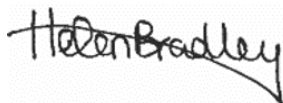
Durham County Council believes that an investigation into the military style policing deployed at Orgreave is long overdue and is the only means to ensure justice for the miners and their families. Only a full public inquiry can properly investigate the tactics used by the police that day.

Therefore this council calls on the Home Secretary to order a full public inquiry into the deployment of the police and their behaviour at Orgreave on 18 June 1984.

15. Questions from Members

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

Dated this 14th day of January 2025

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**

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## Durham County Council

At an **Ordinary Meeting** of the County Council held in the **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 11 December 2024** at **10.00 a.m.**

**Present:**

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

Councillors M Abley, E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Anderson, 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 Charlton, J Clark, I Cochrane, J Cosslett, B Coult, R Crute, M Currah, S Deinali, T Duffy, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, D Freeman, J Griffiths, O Gunn, C Hampson, D Haney, A Hanson, K Hawley, P Heaviside, T Henderson, S Henig, J Higgins, L A Holmes, C Hood, A Hopgood, L Hovvels, D Howarth, J Howey, C Hunt, G Hutchinson, M Johnson, N Jones, P Jopling (Vice-Chair), B Kellett, C Lines, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, B McAloon, S McDonnell, D McKenna, I McLean, S McMahan, J Miller, 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, E Scott, J Scurfield, P Sexton, K Shaw, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, G Smith, T Smith, M Stead, W Stelling, T Stubbs, A Surtees, D Sutton-Lloyd, P Taylor, F Tinsley, S Townsend, C Varty, 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, J Chaplow, A Savory, M Simmons and E Waldock

### **1 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2024 were confirmed by the Council as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **2 Declarations of interest**

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

### **3 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reported that she recently had the pleasure of inviting nine year old Roman Williams and his siblings to light up the Christmas tree at County

Hall and the nearby roundabout. Roman had been invited by the Chair to attend after she had heard about the tremendous courage he showed in coping with a chronic heart condition.

Roman, from Fishburn underwent a heart transplant in December 2015, but there were complications. The Chair explained that despite these challenges, Roman presented himself as a cheerful little boy with a cheeky sense of humour who loved his computer games, Lego and Newcastle United. Switching on the Christmas tree lights was a wonderful experience for him.

The Chair also thanked everyone who attended her Civic Dinner in November. Over £1000 had been raised towards the Chair's two chosen charities. The Chair placed on record her sincere thanks to everyone who had assisted in the organisation of the event.

The Chair also thanked everyone who attended the Christmas celebration in the Durham Room and witnessed an outstanding performance by the Durham Music Service. To see many young people come together and showcase their incredible musical talents to the Council, friends and colleagues from across the North East, was a very proud and special occasion.

The Chair reminded Members that Christmas Jumper Day was being held on 17 December. Monies raised would continue to support her two chosen charities Tiny Lives and Friends Together.

In closing 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.

#### **4 Leader's Report**

The Council noted a report from Councillor A Hopgood, Leader of the Council. In her report, Councillor Hopgood reflected upon what the council had achieved over the last 12 months as follows:

The devolution of power from Westminster to the North East in the spring was certainly a landmark moment. The trailblazing deal between the Government and the new North East Combined Authority had empowered the Council to go even further to deliver on our ambitions and to work with our communities on the things that mattered most to them.

Councillor Hopgood thanked everyone who had taken the bold decision for County Durham to be part of the wider North East Combined Authority, who saw this as an opportunity to deliver for residents and businesses on such a large scale. In the first six months alone, funding had been secured for the

County to the tune of tens of millions of pounds, and secured access to further funding unavailable through any other channel.

Councillor Hopgood went on to highlight that during the summer, the council celebrated the opening of The Story, our new culture, heritage and registration venue and New Hall, Locomotion's new exhibition space.

Staying with culture, Councillor Hopgood referenced the vibrant festival and events programme which had continued to delight residents and attract tens of thousands of visitors to the county. She also referenced the launch of a three-year programme 'Into the Light' which aimed to empower communities, inspire children and young people, and breakdown barriers to working in creative industries.

2024 was also an exciting year for NETPark, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary and saw the last piece of steelwork fitted as part of the £62 million phase three expansion.

Many other construction projects were completed during year, including a new roundabout at Seaton Lane, the expansion of Sniperley Park and Ride and the building of Springmoor Grange Primary School in Spennymoor and Belmont Secondary school.

Councillor Hopgood went on to report that in July, the council adopted its third Climate Emergency Response Plan, which set out over 230 actions to help us become a net zero council by 2030 and a net zero county by 2045. Earlier this month the Council had retained its green accreditation for the third year in a row from Investors in the Environment. The Council were also awarded Best Carbon Reduction Award at their annual awards, with Jo Holmes, managing director of Genee Consulting Ltd, the North East hub for Investors in the Environment, saying: "We love working with Durham County Council through the Investors in the Environment programme – they are an excellent example of leadership from a local authority around this agenda. "The breadth of projects the council is involved in is to be commended and evidence that the team recognise that projects of all scales have value in addressing climate change.

"We're so pleased Durham County Council has been recognised for its hard work with the Best Carbon Reduction Award at this year's Investors in the Environment awards. It is a huge achievement and testament to their continued commitment to the environment."

Furthermore, she reported that the support we offer to children and vulnerable adults had also been recognised with the adult social care provision being rated as good by the Care Quality Commission, while our

specialist children's home was rated outstanding in all areas. Ofsted inspectors also praised the support we offer to care leavers.

In conclusion she added that the above provided a snapshot of an incredibly busy year, and she thanked all members, council staff, our partners and our communities for their hard work.

In closing, Councillor Hopgood wished everyone a wonderful Christmas and expressed that she was looking forward to continuing to work together in 2025 to build a brighter future for County Durham.

## **5 Questions from the Public**

The Chair informed the Council that two questions had been received for the meeting from Mr M Clarke and Professor M Tallerman.

Mr M Clarke was unable to attend to put his question and the Chair therefore read his question as follows:

Meetings of the Durham County Council Cabinet sees the leader and cabinet portfolio holders rise within a structured agenda and read out pre-prepared statements. This has been standard practise for many years, not limited to the current administration and, just to reassure members this is not politically motivated, was certainly the method used by Labour when I sat on the council between 2017 and 2021.

The meetings currently mimic a read-through of a TV script and, whilst appreciating the need for preparation and that officers will almost always prepare a worded statement in advance, the meetings are over-staged.

All councillors should be concerned with connecting the public to politics. Cabinet meetings give important information but they are not meetings, they are read-throughs. Currently, everyone's time could be saved by simply collating the responses in a scripted format and publishing them on the councils website.

Can the cabinet meeting format be reviewed with consideration given on how a better balance can be struck so the meetings at least appear more organic and natural?

If any changes are implemented, I hope full council can agree to retain any improvements beyond the current council term.

Councillor Hopgood thanked Mr Clarke for his question and provided a response as follows:



Cabinet meetings operate in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules as set out in the Council's Constitution and the format has remained unchanged for many years.

Given the proximity to the elections in May 2025, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services will review the format of Cabinet meetings with whoever is elected Leader of the Council at the annual meeting of Council on 21 May 2025 and a report will be presented to the first meeting of the Constitution Working Group in the new municipal year.

The second question was from Professor M Tallerman who was in attendance to ask her question as follows:

Since the Council last considered the issue of fluoridation, there have been three developments. A US Federal Court ruled that water fluoridation poses an unreasonable risk to the IQ of children, and the US National Toxicology Program found a large body of evidence to support this. In the UK, the Cochrane Report found that any reduction in tooth decay in fluoridated areas was so tiny – or possibly non-existent – that the continuation of fluoridation programs is of questionable clinical or public health value.

In light of these new findings, will Council reconsider its support for fluoridation, return the matter to the Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board for debate, and allow representations to these committees from all viewpoints, including opponents of fluoridation?

Councillor Hood thanked Professor Tallerman for her question and provided the following response:

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) consultation on the community water fluoridation expansion in the north east of England has been considered by the appropriate committees of the Council; the Health and Wellbeing Board and both the Children and Young People and Adults and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees. We received several representations which were considered, and responses were provided.

The responses of both these committees to the consultation were submitted to the DHSC. The consultation closed on 31st July 2024.

Existing fluoridation schemes in the United Kingdom are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care who is required by legislation to monitor the effects of water fluoridation schemes on health, and to produce reports at no greater than 4-yearly intervals.

County Durham has an oral health promotion strategy which includes a range of interventions to improve oral health and reduce dental decay,

including fluoridation and supervised toothbrushing schemes. An update on this strategy, including any new evidence, will be provided to the Adults Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2025.

This will also include an update on the outcome of the DHSC consultation on the expansion of community water fluoridation in the north east if available. Members of the public will be able to attend the Scrutiny Committee in the usual way.

The Chair announced that the questions and responses would be posted on the Council's website following the meeting.

## **6 Petitions**

The Council received a petition from Mrs Sheryl Elliott local resident regarding Station Hotel, South Hetton repurposing / demolition.

The Chair thanked Mrs Elliott for presenting the petition which would be forwarded to the appropriate service for a response as part of the Council's Petitions Scheme.

## **7 Report from the Cabinet**

The Council noted a report from the Cabinet which provided information on issues considered at its meetings held on 16 October and 13 November 2024 (for copy see file of Minutes).

## **8 Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic**

The item was deferred to a later meeting.

## **9 Mid-Year Review Report on Treasury Management for the period to 30 September 2024**

The Council noted a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided information on the treasury management mid-year position for 2024/25, a summary of the Council's treasury position, borrowing activity, investment activity, treasury management and prudential indicators at 30 September 2024 and an overview of activity during the first six months of 2024/25 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor R Bell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked the Corporate Director and his team for the comprehensive update on the Council's treasury management activity during the first half of the financial

year. He further thanked the Audit Committee and added that it was pleasing to note that the Council had continued to fully comply with all the requirements of the treasury management policy and strategy.

**Moved** by Councillor R Bell, **Seconded** by Councillor A Watson and

**Resolved:**

That the Council:

(a) Note the Treasury Management position as at 30 September 2024, the treasury management activity during the first half of the financial year and compliance with the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25;

(b) Note the update on implementation of changes in accounting for leases that came into effect from 1 April 2024;

(c) Approve the changes to accounting arrangements for Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), applicable from 1 April 2024, and note the financial implications of this policy change, which will deliver MTFP savings in 2025/26; and

(d) Approve the changes to monetary counterparty limits from 11 December 2024 in response to the reduction in cash investment balances held.

## **10 Review of Local Pension Board**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an overview of the Local Pension Board and set out proposals to expand the Board from 6 to 8 members (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Moved** by Councillor Hopgood, **Seconded** by Councillor Crute and

**Resolved:**

That the Council agree to the expansion of the Local Pension Board from 6 to 8 members.

## **11 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024**

The Council received the 2024 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

The County Durham Director of Public Health focused on the following areas:

- The Health of our people
- The Future Health of our people

- Health and Social Care
- Healthy behaviours
- Wider determinants of health
- Recommendations and Conclusion.

Councillor C Hood, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services welcomed the independent annual report from the Director of Public Health and thanked the Director and her team for its production.

Councillor Hood stated that this year's report 'Unfair and Avoidable, Looking Ahead to Health in 2040' had a focus on the future health of County Durham residents and was great to see the recommendations that are highlighted within the report build on existing work and identified new opportunities. Councillor Hood would look forward to future annual reports which would report on progress being made to ensure that the projections set out in this report did not become a reality.

## **12 Review of the Council's Statement of Gambling Principles (Gambling Policy)**

The Council considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which presented for adoption the revised Statement of Gambling Principles (Gambling Policy) (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Moved** by Councillor D Brown, **Seconded** by Councillor J Shuttleworth and

### **Resolved:**

That the Council agree and adopt the revised Gambling Policy, attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

## **13 Protocol on Members Use of Resources**

The Council considered a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services which presented Council with a draft Protocol on Members Use of Council Resources (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Moved** by Councillor R Bell, **Seconded** by Councillor T Stubbs and

### **Resolved:**

That the Council adopt the Protocol on Members Use of Council Resources.

## **14 Request for Dispensation Under Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972**

The Council considered a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services asking for approval of a dispensation for Councillor M Simmons who was currently unable to attend any Council meetings due to ill-health (for copy see file of Minutes).

**Moved** by Councillor A Hopgood, and **Seconded** by Councillor E Scott.

**Resolved:**

That the Council approve the request for dispensation under section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**15 Motions on Notice**

The Chair informed Council that there were two Motions for consideration.

**Moved** by Councillor L Hovvels, **Seconded** by Councillor J Miller

The former Bluebell Primary School site in Trimdon Grange has been empty for some time, becoming a blight on our community, and a hotspot of ASB and other crime, including arson. This has resulted in damage to a Council building which would cost around £1 million to repair, with current ongoing costs of paying for 24/7 security.

This is because the Council does not have an empty buildings strategy.

Therefore, this Council calls on the relevant Portfolio Holder to establish a cross-party working group to create an Empty Buildings Strategy, to prevent issues, such as this in Trimdon, happening across our county.

Councillors L Maddison, R Bell, M Wilkes, J Rowlandson and A Hopgood spoke against the Motion.

Councillors F Tinsley, C Marshall, A Surtees and O Gunn spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor L Hovvels requested a named vote which was supported.

**For the Motion**

Councillors E Adam, R Adcock-Forster, V Anderson, V Andrews, J Atkinson, P Atkinson, A Batey, K Batey, C Bihari, D Boyes, I Cochrane, R Crute, S Deinali, L Fenwick, C Fletcher, J Griffiths, O Gunn, C Hampson, A Hanson, S Henig, J Higgins, L Hovvels, M Johnson, L Maddison, R Manchester, C Marshall, B McAloon, D McKenna, I McLean, S McMahan, J Miller, P Molloy, D Mulholland, D Nicholls, P Pringle, J Purvis, S Quinn, J Scurfield, P Sexton, K Shaw, G Smith, T Smith, A Surtees, P Taylor, F Tinsley, S Townsend, A Watson, J Watson, M Wilson, D Wood and R Yorke.

### **Against the Motion**

Councillors M Abley, R Bell, D Brown, J Cosslett, M Currah, D Freeman, L Holmes, J Howey, C Hunt, N Jones, P Jopling, D Oliver, E Peeke, R Potts, J Quinn, G Richardson, K Robson, J Rowlandson, E Scott, D Sutton-Lloyd and M Walton.

### **Abstentions**

Councillors A Bell, C Bell, J Blakey, L Brown, J Cairns, J Charlton, B Coult, T Duffy, D Haney, P Heaviside, T Henderson, C Hood, A Hopgood, G Hutchinson, C Lines, C Martin, E Mavin, L Mavin, S McDonnell, J Nicholson, R Ormerod, A Reed, S Robinson, K Rooney, A Shield, J Shuttleworth, M Stead, W Stelling, T Stubbs, M Wilkes and S Zair.

The Motion was **Carried**.

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules, the Chair announced that the time for consideration of Motions had lapsed and announced that the motion from Councillor R Crute would be deferred until the next meeting.

## **16 Questions from Members**

Councillor K Shaw asked the following question:

What financial impact has there been for each of the daytime businesses in Seaham which are located in the adjacent areas where car parking charges have been introduced?

Councillor E Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships thanked Councillor Shaw for his question and provided the following response:

Like other councils, and as a Council with 15,000 businesses we do not and should not track the individual financial performance of every business, however we use other data to provide us with a measure of the performance and vitality of our main centres. This includes both measures of property vacancy across the town and an assessment of footfall. The most recent vacancy figure for Seaham measured in summer 2024 shows 92.8% occupancy – which is the highest occupancy in the County. This compares to a national high street average occupancy rate which remains around 86%.

- Earlier this year you will have seen the highly positive press around The Seaham Marina, with both the berths and the associated units being fully occupied and helping contribute to the diverse offer of the town.

- Having provided long term investment to reposition Seaham's economy we continue to provide support to businesses, implementing the Townscape Heritage Programme, providing business advice, and financial support to new or diversifying businesses through our UK Shared Prosperity programme, including three new businesses in Seaham recently receiving support.
- In the year to date we have progressed 10 business enquiries for the town. We have continued to support events in the town including the recent Food Festival, which attracts over 20,000 visitors.
- We routinely assess all available data for Seaham (and our other towns) to ensure we can support policy and programme development and to assist our centres to be effective retail / leisure destinations. We will continue to provide support and assistance to new businesses and those seeking to diversify.

We remain committed to providing support to Businesses and our town centre including thriving centres such as Seaham and will continue to work with businesses and residents as we develop our new Strategic Place Plans to identify future priorities and opportunities within towns across county Durham.

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**Electoral division(s) affected:**

All

**Purpose of the Report**

To provide information to the Council on issues considered by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 16 October and 13 November 2024 to enable Members to ask related questions by no later than midday 3 working days before the day of the meeting.

**Contents**

**16 October 2024**

Item 1 - Review of Customer Access Point Service Offer (Key Decision: CORP/R/2024/005)

Item 2 - Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024

Item 3 - Adult Social Care Update on the Outcome of the Local Authority Assessment by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) under the Health and Care Act (2022)

Item 4 - Public Sector Equality Duty annual review 2023-2024 and Equality Policy

**13 November 2024**

Item 5 - Council Tax Base 2025/26 and Forecast Surplus / Deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund (Key Decision: CORP/R/2024/002)

Item 6 - Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Annual Review of the Council's use of powers

Item 7 - Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) – Condition and Funding Update

Item 8 - Community Engagement Review

Item 9 - Biodiversity and Non-designated Heritage Asset Supplementary Planning Documents

**1. Item 1 - Review of Customer Access Point Service Offer (Key Decision: CORP/R/2024/005)**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which outlined proposals to adjust the face-to-face service offer delivered in Customer Access points (CAPs) which reflected reduced demand whilst preserving channel choice. The report detailed the findings of the consultation activity and equalities impact assessment (EIA) on the proposals, linked to the achievement of savings targets included in MTFP (14) and highlighted options for early realisation of a proportion of associated savings. The review established the impact and potential benefits of moving from a traditional, building led operating model to a more responsive offer with a focus on delivering customer service support to the places it was most needed and reducing the time spent in current locations to better reflect the demand for service.

**Decision**

We noted the content of the report and the reduced footfall being seen in CAPs and increased demand across other channels and noted the proposal to accelerate the majority of the associated savings currently profiled to be achieved in 2026/27 into 2025/26.

We approved the proposed demand led adjustment to service offer across the CAP estate with effect from 1 October 2025 in line with option 1 set out in the report.

**2. Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024**

We considered a joint report of the Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services and the Director of Public Health which presented the 2024 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for County Durham which set out the health of the local population.

**Decision**

We received the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2024 and agreed to its publication.

### **3. Adult Social Care Update on the Outcome of the Local Authority Assessment by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) under the Health and Care Act (2022)**

We considered a report of the Interim Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services which provided an update on the outcome of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of the way in which the Council discharges its adult social care duties under part 1 of the Care Act 2022 undertaken earlier this year. The report also sought our approval for a Service Improvement Plan which would address areas for development set out in the CQC report and wider service improvement aspirations.

#### **Decision**

We noted the outcome of the CQC assessment and approved the Adult Social Care Service Improvement Plan 2024-2025.

We also agreed to receive annual update reports on progress with the Service Improvement Plan.

### **4. Public Sector Equality Duty annual review 2023-2024 and Equality Policy**

We considered a report of the Chief Executive which sought agreement of an updated Equality Policy (2024-2028) and reviewed the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) annual update 2023-24, prior to publication. The report also included an update on staff networks and the Changing Places toilets funding programme.

The corporate equality, diversity and inclusion programme is broad and cross cutting, necessary to ensure that the council continually addresses its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, in particular, discharge of the public sector equality duty (PSED).

All services, staff and members must take responsibility for equality and inclusion in the delivery of excellent council services and in their working relationships with colleagues and the public.

#### **Decision**

We adopted the refreshed Equality Policy 2024-28 and reviewed and approved the Public Sector Equality Duty annual update 2023-24.

We also noted the updates in relation to the key areas of staff networks and MHCLG funded Changing Places Toilets programme.



## **5. Council Tax Base 2025/26 and Forecast Surplus / Deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund (Key Decision: CORP/R/2024/002)**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which sought to determine the council's tax base for domestic properties liable to pay council tax, which is an important component in the council's budget setting process for 2025/26 and to report on the estimated council tax collection fund surplus / deficit as at 31 March 2025.

### **Decision**

We approved the council tax base for the financial year 2025/26 for the county, which had been calculated (incorporating consultation outcomes) to be 148,760.6 Band D equivalent properties.

We noted the impact on individual Town and Parish council tax bases, including the allocations of Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant allocations for the financial year 2025/26.

We also noted and agreed that the forecasted Council Tax Collection Fund position at 31 March 2025 as set out in the report, be formally declared and the two principal precepting bodies to the Collection Fund - County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority and Durham Police and Crime Commissioner notified accordingly.

## **6. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Annual Review of the Council's use of powers**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services which informed Cabinet about the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period of 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The report also asked us to consider and adopt the annual review of the Council's Corporate RIPA Guidance following consideration by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 28 October 2024.

### **Decision**

We noted the Council's use of RIPA during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and approved the proposed changes to the Council's Corporate RIPA Guidance.

We also approved the proposed changes to the Council's abridged RIPA policy document.

## **7. Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) – Condition and Funding Update**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change which provided an update on the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP), including investment and highway condition across the county.

The adopted highway is the Council's most valuable asset. The HAMP sets out the long-term plan for managing the highway network so that its condition is maximised for the available budget.

### **Decision**

We noted and approved the updated HAMP policy; and the updated HAMP annual update report.

## **8. Community Engagement Review**

We considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which provided an update on the community engagement review project, in particular proposals for the governance, funding, and branding arrangements to replace Area Action Partnerships with a Local Network model.

The report provided an update on the outcomes of the Local Network Boundary consultation exercise and sought approval on proposals to change the current 14 Area Action Partnership boundaries to create 12 new Local Networks.

### **Decision**

We noted the update on the community engagement review project and the outcomes from the countywide consultation exercise for the proposed Local Network boundaries.

We agreed the new Local Network boundaries to create 12 Local Networks. We also approved the governance arrangements and terms of reference, funding guidelines and identity and branding arrangements for the County Durham Community Network and Local Networks.

We delegated authority to the Head of Economic Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships to approve the operating procedures for the Local Networks and agreed the proposed timescales for implementation.

## **9. 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 the second draft of the 'Biodiversity' and 'Non-designated Heritage Asset' (NDHA) Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The SPDs support the County Durham Plan (CDP) adopted in October 2020.

### **Decision**

We agreed the second draft of the Biodiversity SPD and NDHA SPD for consultation from 25 November 2024 to 12 January 2025.

We delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy, and Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships, the power to make minor modifications and adopt the documents following consultation. If any significant changes were required, the SPDs would be considered by Cabinet for adoption.

### **Background Papers**

Cabinet Agenda and Reports

[Cabinet - 16 October 2024](#)

[Cabinet - 13 November 2024](#)

Councillor A Hopgood  
Leader of the Council  
3 December 2024

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County Council

22 January 2025



## Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

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**Report of Corporate Management Team, DCC;  
Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children  
and Young People's Services, DCC;  
Councillor Michelle Walton, Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting  
Panel; DCC**

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To ask Full Council to agree that care experience be adopted as a protected characteristic in County Durham.

### **Executive summary**

- 2 Josh McAllister was appointed by Government to undertake an independent review of Children's Social Care between July 2021 and May 2022. In his report, published in May 2022, he advocated for a legislative change to the Equality Act 2010 to include care experience as a protected characteristic. A copy of the report can be found [HERE: Independent review of CSC: final report - GOV.UK](#)
- 3 Although this legislative change has not been progressed by Government, there have been local discussions about adopting care experience as a protected characteristic and councils throughout England have undertaken work to consider adopting the principles of protected characteristics for care experienced young people.
- 4 To date approximately 104 Local Authorities across England have adopted care experience as a protected characteristic, which has raised awareness about the unique challenges they face, leading to more empathy and understanding from the public and professionals.
- 5 It is recognised that Durham County Council is already committed to supporting our young people who are care experienced, for example including guaranteed interviews in line with other groups who have legal recourse under equality legislation, and exemptions to council tax, however, it is acknowledged that there is more to be done.

### **Recommendations**

- 6 Council is recommended to:
- (a) consider the content of this report, and the background papers.
  - (b) agree that the Council supports the motion as set out in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the report and adopts the principle of recognising care experience as a protected characteristic across County Durham.

## **Background**

- 7 Josh McAllister was appointed by Government to undertake an independent review of Children's Social Care between July 2021 and May 2022. In his report, published in May 2022, he advocated for a legislative change to the Equality Act 2010 to include care experience as a protected characteristic.
- 8 Investing in Children are commissioned by Durham County Council to run the County Durham Children in Care Council (CiCC). More information on the CiCC can be found [HERE: Durham CiCC](#)
- 9 The CiCC became aware of the independent review, and in January 2023 brought an item to the Corporate Parenting Panel, whereby young people representing the CiCC provided an overview of the independent review findings, and explained that under the Equality Act 2010 some characteristics are protected, therefore it is against the law to discriminate against a person because of these characteristics which include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.
- 10 The young people noted that there are increasing moves for care experience to be recognised as a protected characteristic and gave examples of local authorities throughout the country that had agreed to make care experience a protected characteristic.
- 11 On behalf of the CiCC, the young people asked the Corporate Parenting Panel to agree to Durham County Council considering adopting care experience as a protected characteristic.
- 12 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel spoke in support of the proposal and highlighted the good work done by the young people to bring the report to Panel. Agreement was given for further conversations to take place with the CiCC, the Head of Children's Social Care and the Practice Lead for Children and Young People to discuss the processes which would be required to have the proposal formally considered by the Council to help shape Council policies and practices to further support care experienced young people moving forward.
- 13 In March 2023, the Corporate Parenting Panel were informed of the process to take the proposals through a motion to full Council. In advance of this the CiCC were asked to survey a larger group of young people to consider their views on what it would mean to them and what the implications would be of having care experience included as a protected characteristic
- 14 On 13 September 2024, the Corporate Parenting Panel considered a report which included the following motion:

15 This council notes:

- (a) Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives;
- (b) Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account;
- (c) Care experienced people often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and in the criminal justice system;
- (d) Care experienced people may encounter inconsistent support in different geographical areas;
- (e) As corporate parents, councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us as an authority;
- (f) All corporate parents should commit to acting as mentors, hearing the voices of children and young people in our care and to consider their needs in any aspect of council work;
- (g) Councillors should be champions of the children in our care and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society;
- (h) The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics.'

16 This council therefore resolves:

- (a) That it recognises that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination;
- (b) That it recognises that Councils have a duty to put the needs of disadvantaged people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration;
- (c) That future decision, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic.
- (d) That in the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and the annual publication of information relating to

people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment.

- (e) That this Council will treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic.
  - (f) To formally call upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
  - (g) For the council to continue proactively seeking out and listening to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.'
- 17 Corporate parenting panel resolved to present the motion to Council. It was initially envisaged that it would be presented to Council as a motion on notice but after consultation with the Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, it was agreed that it would be presented as report. This would enable Officers and young people (if possible) to introduce the report before Members debate the proposals.
- 18 Treating care experience as a protected characteristic would mean that it would be considered alongside all other protected characteristics when conducting equality impact screenings and assessments as part of decision-making processes. This will help address the inequalities that our care experienced young people referred to in their survey responses.
- 19 Should the motion be agreed by Full Council, this would, demonstrate significant commitment to addressing the inequality of experience by care experienced children and young people in County Durham. This would demonstrate a clear message to our young people but also to the wider partners and community in its recognition of equity for this group.

### **Next Steps**

- 20 A working group has been established with representatives from Corporate Affairs; Equalities and Consultation Officers Group; Communications and Marketing; Children and Young People's Services; Members Services; and Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 21 The working group will consider the impact of the motion being accepted and will prepare briefings for the services and elected members to ensure that across the council, everyone understands the impact this would have.

- 22 Consideration will be given to the changes we expect to see in response to the motion being agreed.

## **Conclusion**

- 23 The Corporate Parenting Panel are in favour of Durham County Council adopting care experience as a local adopted protected characteristic in line with the recommendations of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.
- 24 Giving consideration to care experience from the outset will help us to make services more accessible and the consideration of equity and equality will have a positive impact on everyone. This in turn should reduce the need for young people having to identify as care experienced young people to access the services they need, should they not want to, as they will be inclusive for all from the outset.
- 25 The importance of understanding individual experiences and tailoring services to meet diverse needs will help the Local Authority to safeguard and enhance our children and young people's experiences, both now and in later life.

## **Background papers**

[Agenda for Corporate Parenting Panel on Friday 13 September 2024, 9.30 am - Durham County Council](#)

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

To recognise care experience as a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010 would require legislative change. However, the Council can adopt a policy position whereby care experience is considered locally as if it were a protected characteristic for the purposes of equality impact screening, assessments and decision making.

### **Finance**

No implications.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

Children in Care participated in this survey.

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

The service continually seeks to address inequalities and the proposed motion is designed to further support and address equality and diversity for children in our care. The Equalities team are part of the working group and will give adequate consideration to amending the equality impact assessment and PID templates to include care experience as a protected characteristic.

### **Climate Change**

No implications.

### **Human Rights**

The proposed motion is consistent with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Crime and Disorder**

No implications.

### **Staffing**

No implications.

### **Accommodation**

No implications.

### **Risk**

If the motion is adopted, communications will be issued to raise awareness about care experience being considered as a protected characteristic.

### **Procurement**

No implications.

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County Council

22 January 2025

Review of Members' Allowances Scheme



## Report of Corporate Management Team

### Director of Legal and Democratic Services

#### Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To advise the Council of the outcome of the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme by the Independent Remuneration Panel ("the Panel") for 2025 and beyond.
- 2 To ask the Council to agree a scheme of allowances for 2025/26, taking into account the views of the Panel.

#### Executive summary

- 3 Under The Local Authorities (Member's Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ("The Regulations") the Council must make a Scheme of Allowances for Members each year. The Regulations also provide that before the beginning of each financial year, the authority shall review the Scheme. In doing so, it shall have regard to the recommendations made by the Panel.
- 4 The County Council resolved to retain the existing Members Allowance Scheme up until the elections in 2025 and requested that the Independent Remuneration Panel complete a fundamental review of the scheme in advance of the May 2025 elections, to take account of the changes following the Local Government Boundary Commission Review
- 5 The Panel have carried out a fundamental review to inform the scheme for 2025/26 and beyond, to coincide with implementation of the final recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Review which will be implemented from 1 May 2025.
- 6 Conducting the review at this time, enables Council to set the scheme for the new Members following the election. Agreement of the scheme in advance of the elections and nominations process may assist potential candidates to determine whether they wish to stand for election.

- 7 The Council must have regard to any recommendations of the Panel when approving any changes to the scheme council, although it is not bound by its recommendations and can choose to implement revised arrangements.
- 8 The Panel met five times to consider the scheme. All elected Members had the opportunity to provide their views via a survey and Group Leaders were offered the opportunity to meet individually with the Panel.
- 9 This report sets out the outcome of the Panel's deliberations and relevant matters for Council to consider.
- 10 If Council accepts the recommendations of the Panel, it would result in a net saving of £284,004 to the Council.

### **Recommendations**

- 11 The Council is asked to consider the outcome of the review undertaken and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the Members Allowances Scheme 2025 and beyond.

## Background

- 12 Under The Local Authorities (Member's Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ("The Regulations"), the Council must make a Scheme of Allowances for Members each year which makes provision for the payment of a range of allowances and expenses to elected members. A copy of the Council's existing scheme is attached at Appendix 2 to the report.
- 13 The Regulations also provide that before the beginning of each financial year, the authority shall review the Scheme and before it confirms or amends the Scheme, it shall have regard to the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel ("the Panel"). The Scheme may be amended at any time during the financial year.
- 14 Each local authority must appoint a Panel to make representations on allowances, including the amounts payable. When approving any changes to its scheme, the Council must have regard to the IRPs recommendations, although it does not have to agree with those recommendations.
- 15 Following the Local Government Boundary Commission Review, the Council was required to conduct a fundamental review of the Member Allowance Scheme to be implemented from May 2025.
- 16 The last changes made to the Member Allowance Scheme for Durham County Council were for the year 2014/15. At that time, the IRP recommended a 1% increase to the basic allowance. Council considered that recommendation and decided not to introduce an increase, although the Council did agree to reduce the Members Mileage Allowance to 45p per mile in line with the HMRC rate.
- 17 This is the only change to the scheme since it was adopted in 2009, following Local Government Review. However, the IRP previously recommended an increase to the Basic Allowance of 1% in 2014/15, 0.7% in 2021/22, and 2% in 2022/23. The IRP considered these proposed increases to be appropriate at the time based on all factors taken into consideration. On all occasions the Council subsequently decided to make no changes to the Scheme.
- 18 In June 2023, the Council agreed that there would be no further changes to the existing allowances scheme until after the local elections in 2025 but requested that the Panel conduct a fundamental review of the scheme to take account of the changes under the Local Government Boundary Commission Review, which are to be implemented from May 2025.
- 19 Members asked the Panel to consider whether applying an annual indexation to any new scheme that was adopted was appropriate and expressed a preference for reviewing the scheme every four years in advance of the local elections.

- 20 Whilst the Council must agree a Scheme of Members' Allowances annually and that an Independent Remuneration Panel consider the scheme at least once every four years. The Regulations allow for annual indexing of allowances, but this must be reviewed at least every four years.
- 21 The Members of the Panel are Alan Fletcher, Joyce Drummond-Hill (appointed in 2015) and Ray Morris (appointed in 2019). All of the Panel Members had their terms extended until 30 September 2025 to provide continuity during this detailed review of the scheme.
- 22 The Panel met on 12 and 27 November and 10, 16 and 17 December 2024 and took into consideration all of the information provided.

### **Panel Deliberations**

- 23 The Panel were asked to consider the following areas:
- i. The impact of the reduction in the number of Councillors following implementation of the Boundary Review changes from May 2025, and the effect this may have on Councillor workloads and the role of elected Members;
  - ii. The level of Basic Allowance for all Members;
  - iii. The current categories of the special responsibility for which a Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid and the levels of those allowances;
  - iv. Whether annual adjustments to the level of allowances should be determined according to an index, and if so, which index and how long that index should apply. Regulation 10(5) of The Local Authorities (Member's Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, states that where a scheme provides for an index to be applied, it must not rely on that index for longer than four years without referral back to the Panel;
  - v. Consider setting a scheme and reviewing every four years, as opposed to reviewing it yearly, as it does currently;
  - vi. the allowances paid to co-opted members of committees;
  - vii. the existing Dependant Carers' Allowance;
  - viii. travelling and subsistence allowances;
  - ix. the introduction of remote/hybrid meetings and the role of members; and
  - x. Any other matters as raised by the Group Leaders/Corporate Director of Resources, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer or a resolution from Council.

- 24 The Panel were briefed on the Local Government Boundary Review exercise, and the statutory criteria for the Review. A copy of the Final Recommendations arising from the Review were also provided and a summary of the main implications.
- 25 The Panel took cognisance that at the 2021 elections Durham County Council had 126 Councillors, 63 Divisions and 391,730 electors within the County with a councillor per elector ratio being 3,109 electors per Councillor. The Panel noted that from 1 May 2025 there would be a 22% reduction of Council Size from 126 to 98 Members, and that the County would comprise 51 Electoral Divisions, and 391,146 electors with the councillor per elector ratio increasing to 3,991 per Councillor, an increase of 882 electors per Councillor. Forecasted data suggested that between 2025-2028 the electorate would rise to 406,665 and the councillor per elector ratio would increase to 4,150.
- 26 Copies of the current basic allowance, special responsibility allowance, subsistence and travel rates were also supplied to the Panel.
- 27 In the past, the Panel had found it helpful to be aware of the current rates of basic allowances and special responsibility allowances that are paid by councils in the region to their members, along with where Durham ranked in comparison to neighbouring authorities. The information is attached to the report at Appendix 3 and also form Appendix C of the IRP Panel report.
- 28 As part of their deliberations, the Panel also requested a copy of the report by the Panel agreed in 2009 following Local Government Review, which linked all Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) to the Basic Allowance and the relationship that had been maintained since that time. A spreadsheet shows the percentage of the basic allowance applied to the respective SRAs which had been in place since 2009 is attached at Appendix 4.
- 29 The Panel discussed whether feedback from Members had been sought in relation to the Members' Allowances Scheme. It was noted that in previous years, this had resulted in very limited Member feedback being received.
- 30 Officers prepared an online questionnaire in conjunction with the Panel with a view to maximising member responses. All Members were emailed on 21 November 2024 requesting them to complete the online survey. A reminder was issued on 26 November 2024.
- 31 73 responses to the questionnaire were received, a 58% return rate. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at Appendix 5 and a summary of responses is attached at Appendix 6. One political group provided a written response for the Panel to consider.

- 32 An opportunity was also extended to all Group Leaders to meet individually with the Panel to share their views as part of the evidence gathering process. Individual meetings took place with five out of eight Group Leaders on 10 and 17 December 2024.
- 33 A table of those Unitary Authorities who had been subject to a Local Government Boundary Review and an associated reduction of their Council size was provided and is attached at Appendix 7.
- 34 Finally, the Panel were provided with information about the ongoing review of Governance Arrangements which set out proportionate reductions of 22% to the number of members serving of committees.
- 35 The Panel were advised that the frequency and number of meetings would likely remain unchanged given the expected business to transact, except for the number of meetings of the Full Council, which would reduce from nine to seven meetings for the municipal year 2025/26 but would be reviewed in future years if appropriate.
- 36 The Panel have prepared a report, which is attached at Appendix 8, which summarises all of the information that they have considered and the rationale for their recommendations.
- 37 The Panel have recommended the following:

#### **Basic Allowance and application of an index**

- (i) Following the May 2025 elections, the basic allowance of £13,300 is increased by an interim 5% to £13,965, to reflect, for the time being at least, the reduction in the number of members from 126 to 98. This is the recommendation of a majority of the Panel members.
- (ii) This recommended increase in the basic allowance is not to be reflected in a linked increase in Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs), as the increase relates only to Members' responsibilities covered by the basic allowance.
- (iii) The Panel, supported by officers, will undertake a further review of the impact on members' workload of the various changes brought about as a consequence of the boundary review, including the new the committee timetables, smarter ways of working, the experiences of members under the new arrangements and of the development of hybrid meetings. The timing of this review is to be agreed between the Panel and officers.
- (iv) The Council should arrange to collect data on the 2025 elections to enable it to assess whether or not the number of candidates coming forward for election is sufficient to ensure that local democracy is being adequately served.

- (v) the basic allowance is increased for 2025, with reference to the September 2024 CPI rate of 1.7%. This will result in the Basic Allowance being £14,202 in 2025/26.
- (vi) the Council should link future increases to the CPI for a period of up to 4 years, as permitted by legislation, based on the CPI rate as at September of the preceding year.

### **Special Responsibility Allowances**

- (i) The Panel and officers review the SRAs post the implementation of the Boundary Review changes, to address the above issues and any others arising during the review.
- (ii) The Council freezes the categories and amounts SRAs until this review is completed.

### **Dependent Carers Allowance**

- (i) The Panel recommends that the maximum rate payable will be increased each April in line with the national living wage at age 21.

38 If Council chose not to accept the IRP's recommendations, there would be saving in relation to the basic allowances of £372,400 as a result of the reduction in Members from 126 to 98.

39 The IRP's proposed increases to the basic allowance would cost £88,396. Therefore, if Council were to accept the increase, the net saving to the Council would be £284,004. An increase of 6.7% would increase the basic allowance from £13,300 to £14,202, which is average cost of 36p per elector.

40 If the inflationary increases are accepted, this must be reviewed by the Panel at least every four years.

41 Council is required to consider the recommendations of the IRP when agreeing its scheme of allowances. Council does not have to accept some or all of the recommendations.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

To comply with the Local Authorities (Member's Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ("The Regulations").

### **Finance**

Advertising costs of seeking applications and reimbursement of reasonable expenses. The current budget for Members Basic Allowances is £1,675,800. The Panel proposals with regards to Basic Allowances would result in a budget cost reduction of £284,004. This is not currently factored into the MTFP in terms of a budget saving.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

All elected Members were given an opportunity to provide their views via a survey. All Group Leaders were offered the opportunity to meet with the IRP. Constitution Working Group were consulted on the proposals at a meeting held on 9 January 2025.

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

None specific within this report.

### **Human Rights**

None specific within this report.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None specific within this report.

### **Staffing**

None specific within this report.

### **Accommodation**

None specific within this report.

### **Risk**

None specific within this report.

### **Procurement**

None specific within this report.



## Part 6 – Members Allowances Scheme

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# **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **MEMBERS HANDBOOK AND ALLOWANCES GUIDE**

**Allowances as at 1 April 2022**

## **Preface**

This booklet is intended to provide Councillors with a detailed guide to the rules governing the payment of allowances together with details of the amounts payable and the procedures to be followed in making claims, etc.

## Allowances Payable

- 1.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require that an authority shall make a scheme in respect of the succeeding financial year on or before 31st March each year. The scheme may be amended at any time but may only be revoked with effect from the beginning of a year.
- 1.2 Under these regulations Councils are required to establish and maintain an independent remuneration panel to provide the local authority with advice on its scheme and the amounts to be paid. Local authorities must have regard to this advice.
- 1.3 The prescribed components of the County Council Scheme are as follows:

- (a) Basic Allowance

- i) Payable to each Member of the authority who is a County Councillor. Where the term of office of a Councillor begins or ends otherwise than at the beginning or end of a financial year the amount of basic allowance due is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Days in Office} \times \text{Annual Basic Allowance}}{\text{Number of Days in Year}}$$

- ii) Basic Allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all Councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meeting with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their homes. The allowance is also intended to cover the cost of meals and other incidental expenses incurred within the region.
- iii) The amount of allowance per Member as at 1st April 2019 is £13,300 per annum and is to be paid at £1108.33 per month.

- (b) Special Responsibility Allowance

- i) Payable to Members of the Council specified in the Scheme who have special responsibilities. Where a Councillor takes up or relinquishes any special responsibility otherwise than at the beginning or end of the financial year the amount of special responsibility allowance payable is calculated as follows:

Number of days performing <u>special responsibility</u> Number of days in year	X	annual special responsibility allowance
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---	-----------------------------------------------

- ii) No Member can receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance.
  - iii) The amounts currently payable are shown in Appendix A.
- (c) Dependant Carers' Allowance
- i) A dependant carers' allowance is payable at a rate not exceeding £8.36 an hour to those Councillors who incur expenditure for the care of dependent relatives or children whilst undertaking approved duties. "Approved duties" are specified in the Regulations and are as follows:
    - a. A meeting of the Executive;
    - b. A meeting of a committee of the Executive;
    - c. A meeting of the Authority;
    - d. A meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the authority;
    - e. A meeting of some other body to which the authority makes appointments or nominations; or
    - f. A meeting of a committee or sub-committee of a body to which the authority makes appointments or nominations;
    - g. A meeting which has both been authorised by the authority, a committee, or sub-committee of the authority or a joint committee of the authority and one or more other authorities, or a sub-committee of a joint committee;
    - h. A meeting which has both been authorised by the authority, a committee, or sub-committee of the authority or a joint committee of the authority and one or more other authorities, or a sub-committee of a joint committee; and
    - i. to which representatives of more than one political group have been invited (if the authority is divided into several political groups) or to which two or more councillors have been invited (if the authority is not divided into political groups);

- j. A meeting of a local authority association of which the authority is a member;
  - k. Duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in connection with the discharge of any function of the authority conferred by or under any enactment and empowering or requiring the authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises;
  - l. Duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in connection with arrangements made by the authority for the attendance of pupils at a school approved for the purposes of section 342 of the Education Act 1996.
- ii) Payment is claimable in respect of children aged 16 or under and in respect of other dependants where there is medical or social work evidence that care is required. Evidence would take the form of a letter from a doctor or social worker stating the maximum time that the dependant could be left without care.
  - iii) The allowance is paid against actual expenditure evidenced by receipts. The allowance is not payable to a member of the claimant's household. The maximum rate payable will be increased each April in line with the national minimum wage. (The hourly rate is paid in line with national minimum wage at age 21).
- 1.4 The amounts specified in paragraph 1.3(a) and Appendix A of this document are subject to an annual review by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

### **Foregoing Allowances**

- 1.5 A member may, by notice in writing given to the Corporate Director of Resources, elect to forego any part of their entitlement to an allowance under this scheme.

### **Co-opted Members**

- 1.6 Co-opted Members (including Parent Governor Representatives) are entitled to claim travelling allowance at the rates given in Appendix C. This allowance is taxable. A claim form should be completed and forwarded to the Committee Services contact as soon as practicable after the duty has been performed.

## 2. Definition of Approved Duties

### Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

2.1 Payable in respect of expenditure incurred in the performance of approved duties. Subsistence allowance is not payable for duties performed within the boundaries of the counties of Durham (including Darlington) and Northumberland, and the former administrative counties of Tyne & Wear and Cleveland.

2.2 The definition of an approved duty is as follows:

- (a) A meeting of the County Council or of the Cabinet or of any committee, or sub-committee of the County Council, or of any body to which the County Council makes appointments or nominations, or of any committee or sub-committee of such a body.

A list of bodies covered by this paragraph is given in Appendix D.

A number of such bodies operate their own schemes of allowances. A list of these is given at Appendix F.

- (b) Any other meeting the holding of which is authorised by the County Council, a committee or sub-committee of the County Council, or a joint committee of the County Council and one or more other authorities, or a sub-committee of such a joint committee, provided that it is a meeting to which Members of at least two political groups have been invited.
- (c) A meeting of any association of authorities of which the County Council is a member.
- (d) The performance of any duty in connection with arrangements made by the County Council for the attendance of pupils at any school approved for the purposes of Section 342 (approval of non-maintained special schools) of the Education Act 1996.
- (e) Any other duty approved by the County Council in connection with the discharge of the functions of the Council or of any of its committees or sub-committees including the making of official and courtesy visits on behalf of the authority. Tasks so approved are shown below:
  - i) Attendance by County Councillors at County Hall to read official papers and deal with correspondence.

- ii) Attendance by chair and vice-chair of committees and sub-committees at pre-meeting discussions with officers.
- iii) Attendance at a meeting to which the Member is invited whether as chair, vice-chair or otherwise, by or on behalf of the Chief Executive, the Director of Resources or another chief officer to discuss matters or consider issues relating to the functions of the County Council, including meetings with third parties such as government departments, statutory bodies, other local authorities, trade unions and the public.
- iv) Attendance at press conferences to which the Member is invited by the Corporate Director, Resources in consultation with the appropriate chair or vice-chair.
- v) Attendance by a Member at the request of the Local Government Ombudsman, for interview by an officer of the Ombudsman in relation to a complaint against the County Council.
- vi) Attendance at a meeting with the appropriate officer(s) of any of the bodies listed in Appendix D to which the Member is invited by the body, or attendance at a meeting with third parties when representing the body by virtue of their position as chair or vice-chair of the body or one of its committees or sub-committees, the purpose of their attendance being to discuss matters arising for the purpose of or in connection with the functions of the body.
- vii) Attendances at conferences or meetings held inside or outside the United Kingdom and convened by any person or body (other than a person or body convening it in the course of a trade or business or a body the objects of which are wholly or partly political) for the purpose of discussing matters which in their opinion relate to the interests of their area or any part of it or the interests of the inhabitants of their area or any part of it.
- viii) Official openings of County Council establishments, Developments and Exhibitions at the invitation of the appropriate Chief Officer in consultation with the Leader or Deputy Leader of the County Council. This is intended to cover situations where Members are required to perform a duty such as perform an opening ceremony, make a speech, give prizes etc. Courtesy invitations issued to several or all Members are functions which do not qualify for payment. Members are advised to seek guidance from appropriate Chief Officers.



- 2.3 Invitations from groups or bodies to attend meetings as a Local Member are not approved duties for the payment of travelling and subsistence allowances. These duties are constituency matters not connected with the discharge of the functions of the County Council.
- 2.4 Details of the travelling and subsistence allowances currently payable are shown in Appendix C.

#### **Travelling to conferences, seminars, etc.**

- 2.5 Members who in their capacity as a County Councillor receive an invitation directly to a conference, seminar etc. should, if they wish to attend, contact Member Development on 03000 265 346 who will consult with the appropriate designated Member.

#### **Payment of expenses of official and courtesy visits, etc.**

- 2.6 Subject to paragraph 2.7 the County Council will pay the cost of any travelling or other expenses reasonably incurred by or on behalf of any members in making official and courtesy visits, whether inside or outside the United Kingdom, on behalf of the County Council.
- 2.7 In the case of a visit within the United Kingdom, the amount paid under this section in respect of the expenses of any member of the County Council shall not exceed the payments which they would have been entitled to receive by way of travelling allowance or subsistence allowance if the making of the visit had been an approved duty of that member.

#### **Ground rules for travel**

- 2.8 Ground rules for Members' Claims for Travel and Subsistence are set out in Appendix B.

#### **Meals on Trains**

- 2.9 Members may claim full reimbursement of the reasonable cost (including VAT) of a main meal (full breakfast, lunch or dinner) taken on a train. Members wishing to claim must submit receipts. Where full reimbursement is claimed the allowance for the meal provided cannot also be claimed, i.e. breakfast, lunch, dinner, etc.

### **Travel outside the United Kingdom**

2.10 Members may claim for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred. Receipts for all expenses must be submitted with any claim, as set out in Appendix B.

### **Out of Pocket Expenses**

2.11 Where the attendance fee for a course or conference includes accommodation and meals, an out-of-pocket expense allowance is payable in place of the normal subsistence allowances.

2.12 The current rates are set out in Appendix C.

### **Special Functions and Occasions**

2.13 Elected Members on occasions are invited or feel it necessary to attend functions or occasions which have a social element. No allowances are paid to Members of the Council on these occasions unless the Member is undertaking the performance of a specific duty, e.g. making a speech or distributing prizes when travel and subsistence allowances may be paid. Courtesy invitations issued to several or all Members are functions which do not qualify for payments.

## **3. Claim Forms**

### **Completion**

3.1 The attention of Members is drawn to the following points when completing a claim form:

- (a) The claim form must be completed and signed in ink.
- (b) Full details/description of an approved duty must be given
  - i) if the reason for claiming travelling or subsistence allowances is a qualifying meeting, the full title of the meeting should be given;
  - ii) for conferences, seminars, etc., full details must be given, including names of any officers involved, conference title and location, etc;
  - iii) VAT receipts for purchase of petrol should be attached to all claims

### Submission

- 3.2 Payment of allowances is made monthly. All deadlines and payment dates are published in advance and are available to view on the Councillors page of the Intranet.
- 3.3 All travel and subsistence claims are paid along with any allowances direct into a bank/building society of your choice. There is no facility for cheque payment in relation to Allowances or claims.
- 3.4 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 prescribe that claims **must** be submitted within two months of the date of the meeting for which the claim is made.

### Advances

- 3.5 In exceptional cases, payment of an advance can be arranged via the Business Support Team on 03000 263 751

### Avoidance of Duplication of Allowances

- 3.6 A councillor performing approved duties as a member of more than one body or becoming entitled to payments under any other legislation must ensure that only one claim is made for that duty.

### Withholding Allowances

- 3.7 Where payment of any allowance has already been made in respect of any period during which the member concerned:-
  - (a) ceases to be a member of the County Council, or
  - (b) is in any other way not entitled to receive the allowance in respect of that period, the County Council requires that such part of the allowance as relates to any such period be repaid to the County Council.

## 4. Members Appointed to Other Bodies

Special arrangements apply to Members who are appointed to certain bodies, such as the Local Government Association, the North East Regional Employers' Organisation and the Association of North East Councils, which operate their own allowances schemes. Notes are attached in Appendices G to I which deal with the individual schemes. Attendance allowances payable

under these schemes are in addition to the basic allowance from the County Council.

## 5. Income Tax

Tax is payable on basic allowances, special responsibility allowance, attendance allowance payable by other bodies, dependant's carers' allowance and co-optees' allowance. Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is notified of all new Members. However, as Members' circumstances vary, and their tax may be dealt with at other HMRC offices, it is advisable for Members to make arrangements with their Tax Inspector for a tax code number to be allocated.

## 6. Pensions

With effect from the local elections in May 2017, no councillors have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

## 7. Insurance

The County Council has arranged travel insurance for its Members while travelling abroad on County Council business. Cover is provided for medical expenses, baggage, cash and personal public liability: details are available from the Insurance Officer on **(03000) 269 666**.

## 8. Social Security

### National Insurance Contributions

- 8.1 National Insurance contributions are payable on all basic allowances, special responsibility allowances, attendance allowances payable by other bodies, plus elements of mileage allowances, provided the aggregate amount of these allowances reaches a lower earnings limit (£120 per week or £520 per month) and the Member is under state pension age. Members who are state pension age – are not liable to pay National Insurance contributions provided confirmation is provided of their age in the form of a birth certificate or passport (originals only) which should be sighted by the Business Support Officer. Alternatively a certificate of non-liability could be supplied by the local office of the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 8.2 There is an annual maximum contribution liability for people with more than one job and, in some instances, Members in this position may be entitled to a refund of contributions; alternatively they may apply to the DWP to defer payment of contributions in their capacity as councillors.

## Benefits

8.3 The National Insurance contributions paid by Members count towards the full range of contributory benefits, including statutory sick pay, state pensions, unemployment benefits, etc.

## Advice

8.4 Advice on contributions and benefits can be obtained from the local office of the Department of Work and Pensions.

## 9. Sick Pay

Members who fall ill will receive their basic allowance and special responsibility allowance, as normal. As there is no deduction for being off sick, Statutory Sick Pay is not payable in addition to these allowances and it is not necessary to submit a self-certification of sickness form or a doctor's sick note when you are ill.

## 10. Members' Surgeries

10.1 The County Council will pay the cost for one surgery per month. Invoices for room hire can be sent to Durham County Council for payment or alternatively can be reclaimed from Resources, Business Support on production of a receipt.

10.2 Please note that attendances at surgeries **DO NOT** qualify for travelling and subsistence, and other expenses such as advertising costs must be borne by the Members who incur them.

## 11. Members Parental Leave

11.1 On 20 January 2021 the Council approved a Members Parental Leave Policy which is shown at Appendix K. The objective of the policy is to ensure that insofar as possible Members are able to take appropriate leave at the time of birth or adoption; that both parents are able to take appropriate parental leave; and that reasonable and adequate arrangements are in place to provide cover for portfolio-holders and others in receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) during any period of leave taken.

## Appendix A Members' Allowances Special Responsibility Allowance

Designation	Amount (£)
Chair of the County Council	6650
Vice-Chair of the County Council	3325
Leader of the County Council	36575
Deputy Leader of the County Council	19950
Cabinet Member (x8)	13300
Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board	13300
Vice-Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board	7980
Chair of Appeals and Complaints Committee	2660
Vice-Chair of Appeals and Complaints Committee	1330
Chair of Audit Committee	2660
Vice-Chair of Audit Committee	1330
Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel	2660
Vice-Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel	1330
Chair of Highways Committee	2660
Vice-Chair of Highways Committee	1330
Chair of General Licensing and Registration Committee	3325
Vice-Chair of General Licensing and Registration Committee	1662
Chair of Statutory Licensing Committee	3325
Vice-Chair of Statutory Licensing Committee x 2	1662
Chair of General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee (1)	3325
Chair of General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee (2)	3325
Chair of General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee (3)	3325
Chair of County Planning Committee	3325
Vice-Chair of County Planning Committee	1662
Chair of Area Planning Committee (North Durham)	3325
Vice-Chair of Area Planning Committee (North Durham)	1662
Chair of Area Planning Committee (Central and East Durham)	3325
Vice-Chair of Area Planning Committee (Central and East Durham)	1662

Chair of Area Planning Committee (South and West)	3325
Vice-Chair of Area Planning Committee (South and West)	1662
Chair of Pension Fund Committee	2660
Vice-Chair of Pension Fund Committee	1330
Chair of Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee	2660
Vice-Chair of Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee	1330
Chair of Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee	2660
Vice-Chair of Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee	1330
Chair of Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee	2660
Vice-Chair of Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee	1330
Chair of Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee	2660
Vice-Chair of Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee	1330
Chair of Adults, Wellbeing and Health Scrutiny Committee	2660
Vice-Chair of Adults, Wellbeing and Health Scrutiny Committee	1330
Chair of Standards Committee	2660
<b>Where an Opposition Group has 20% or more of the Council Members allowance is £6650, where Group has less than 20% membership allowance is £3325</b>	

## Appendix B

### Ground rules For Members' Claims For Travel And Subsistence

#### 1. Travel by Rail

Rail tickets should be requested from the Business Support Team in the Resources Service Grouping in advance of travel, as the Council's contract provides for a discount.

Members should either contact Members' Support who will liaise directly with Business Support on your behalf, or members can go direct to the Business Support Team.

Standard Class rail travel is the approved class of travel, although first class rail can sometimes be the cheaper option dependent upon the time of booking.

Members wishing to travel first class when it is not the cheapest option can choose to do so but will be required to pay the difference between that cost and the standard cost. The difference will be recovered by payroll deduction.

Tickets can be booked up to 3 months in advance of date of travel. Members should make their requests as far in advance as possible in order to maximise savings and should you have any special requirements to assist you with your journey please advise Members' Support or the Business Support Team at the time of the request.

Members eligible for a Senior Citizens Railcard or any other concessionary travel railcard and who may be required to travel as part of their duties are encouraged to buy one as this results in a further discount on the ticket cost. The cost of the railcard will be reimbursed upon receipt of your first claim for travel and subsistence.

#### 2. Overnight Accommodation

Where it is considered that an overnight stay is required, then accommodation should be organised in advance by the Business Support Team.

Members should contact Members' Support who will liaise with Business Support to organise for you. Alternatively, please contact the Business Support Team direct who will also be able to satisfy any specific queries or special requirements which you may have.



Accommodation along with Breakfast and Evening meal, if required, will be booked and paid for in advance. Members should make their requests as far in advance as possible in order to achieve best prices and should you have any special requirements in relation to your booking please advise us at the time of the request.

Reimbursement for any additional meals purchased up to the maximum amounts detailed below i.e. breakfast, lunch, tea or evening meal can be claimed retrospectively (less any meals provided) on the production of receipts. Should it not be possible to obtain subsistence within these limits then actual costs can be claimed up to a reasonable amount in liaison with Business Support Manager and upon the production of receipts.

In exceptional circumstances an advance can be given to cover incidental subsistence/travel requirements i.e. lunch, evening meal, taxis, where it has not been possible to organise these prior to travel. Receipts should be retained to cover all advance expenditure and this can be reconciled on return.

Rates are set out below and also for reference shown on members' claim forms.

Allowance	Minimum absence from home	Rate £
Breakfast	2 hours which must be before 11.00am	6.75
Lunch	2 hours which must be between 12 noon and 2.00pm	9.27
Tea	3 hours which must include 3.00pm to 6.00pm	3.65
Evening Meal	3 hours which must be after 7.00pm	11.48

**NB.** No reimbursement for alcohol purchased will be made – should this be included on your receipt it will be deducted from the amount claimed.

Whilst it is appreciated that most travel is planned and can be organised in advance there may be exceptional circumstances where Members may need to organise themselves. In such circumstances, retrospective claims for travel or accommodation will be paid when submitted on monthly claim forms and on the production of receipts.

The current rates are laid out below and are intended to cover the costs of accommodation and associated subsistence during a 24 hour period. However, it is also recognised that on occasion it may not be possible to obtain accommodation and subsistence within these limits and therefore higher amounts can be claimed up to a reasonable amount upon presentation of receipts. However only in exceptional circumstances should this be the case.

<b>Overnight allowance</b>	<b>Maximum Claim</b>	<b>Rate £</b>
London	Up to a maximum claim on production of receipts	£124.76
Outside London	Up to a maximum claim on production of receipts	£109.39

### **3. Travel by car as an alternative to Rail**

As a general rule, journeys outside the locality should be undertaken by rail as this is usually the cheapest mode of travel for someone travelling alone.

The ability to get to a particular destination by rail needs to be taken into account. Where the venue for the meeting is some distance from the railway station, the advantages and disadvantages of alternative methods of travel should be considered. Where Members choose to travel by car on a journey that would be reasonable to travel by rail either mileage or the cost of the cheapest available rail fare will be paid, whichever is the cheaper.

### **4. Air Travel**

The cost of travel by air shall not exceed the cost applicable to travel by appropriate alternative means of transport. Unless in circumstances where the saving in time is so substantial as to justify payment of the fare for travel by air.

All arrangements should be made by contacting Members' Support who will liaise with Business Support to organise for you. Alternatively, please contact the Business Support Team in relation to any specific queries or special requirements which you may have.

### **5. Travel outside the United Kingdom**

The same procedure as shown above will apply.

## Appendix C

### Members' Allowances

### Travelling Allowances

Travelling allowances are payable for journeys undertaken in the performance of official duties. The rates are as follows from 1 April 2019

1. The rate for travel by a Member's own private motor vehicle, or one belonging to a member of their family or otherwise provided for their use, will be paid at 45.0p a mile
2. The rate for travel by a hired motor vehicle, other than a taxi-cab or cab, shall not exceed the value of the claim which would have been applicable had the vehicle belonged to the Member who hired it.
3. The rate for travel by taxi-cab or cab shall not exceed:
  - in cases of urgency or where no public transport is reasonably available, the amount of the actual fare and any reasonable gratuity paid (receipts should be obtained where possible);
  - in any other case, the amount of the fare for travel by appropriate public transport.

### Motor Vehicle Insurance

Members are advised that when using their own vehicle for meetings they will be deemed to be using it on County Council business. It is therefore essential that vehicles should be adequately insured, and Members are therefore required to ensure that insurance covers business use as well as for the usual social, domestic and pleasure categories.

The Association of British Insurers provide a list of approved insurance companies which indemnify local authorities against all third party claims arising out of the use of their vehicle. A copy of the list is shown at Appendix J.

If a Member is covered for business use by a company not on the list, they should contact their insurer and arrange the necessary indemnity, which should be supplied in the form of a letter. An example is given in appendix J. Insurance companies not on this approved list, although they would insure for business use, would not cover injuries to a third party unless the necessary indemnity had been arranged.

## Subsistence Allowances

### Duties performed within the United Kingdom

When carrying out approved duties “Out of Region”, Members may claim up to the approved rates as follows on production of receipts:

1. For an absence not involving an absence overnight from the usual place of residence:

Allowance	Minimum absence from home	Rate (£)
Breakfast	2 hours which must be before 11.00	6.75
Lunch	2 hours which must include 12.00 to 14.00	9.27
Tea	3 hours which must include 15.00 to 18.00	3.65
Evening Meal	3 hours which must be after 19.00	11.48

### Travel Outside the United Kingdom

Members may claim for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred. **Receipts for all expenses must be submitted with the claim**, as set out in Appendix B.

### Out of Pocket Expenses

Where the attendance fee for a course or conference includes accommodation and meals, an out-of-pocket expense allowance is payable, as follows:

Location of Course	£ per day
Courses or conferences within the UK	5.00
Courses or conferences overseas	18.00

the day of arrival and departure being counted as one day.

### Taxable and Non-Taxable Mileage

From 6 April 2016, following a change in HMRC guidance, all mileage claimed for journeys from this date should be shown as non-taxable mileage.

## Appendix D Members' Allowances

### Schedule of other bodies, attendance at meetings of which (subject to the approval of a committee or other body) entitles a County Councillor to claim travelling and subsistence allowance.

#### Outside Bodies

##### Name of Body

Admissions Forum  
Annfield Plain Gleemen  
Association for Public Service Excellence  
Association of North East Councils – Collaborative Procurement Board  
Association of North East Councils - Leaders and Elected Members Board  
Association of North East Councils – North East Culture Partnership Board  
Association of North East Councils – Resources Task and Finish Group

Barnard Castle Mechanics Institute  
Barnard Castle School Governing Body  
Beamish Museum Board  
Believe Housing Board  
Bishop Auckland Community Partnership (Four Clocks)  
Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone Advisory Group  
Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone  
Bowes Museum  
Bus Lane Adjudication Service Joint Committee  
Business Durham Advisory Board - Members

Castle Eden Dene Nature Joint Advisory Committee  
CDC Enterprise Agency  
Central Durham Joint Crematorium Committee  
Chapter Homes  
Charter Trustees for the City of Durham  
Chester le Street Unit of Sea Cadet Corps  
Chester Moor Village Scheme  
Children in Care Council

Dene Bank Regeneration Programme Strategic Working Group  
Citizens Advice County Durham  
Cong Burn Wood Nature Reserve Management Committee

Consett Churches Detached Youth Project  
Cornforth Partnership  
County Councils Network  
County Councils Network - Executive Committee  
County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority  
County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust Council of Governors  
County Durham Children and Families Partnership  
County of Durham School Benevolent Fund  
Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill Tarmac Quarries Liaison Committee

Dene Bank Regeneration Programme Strategic Working Group  
Derwent Valley Landscape Partnership- the Land of Oak and Iron in North East England  
Derwentside District Scout Council  
Derwentside Enterprise Agency Board  
Durham Business Improvement District Board  
Durham City Access for All  
Durham Cricket CIC  
Durham Darlington and Teesside, Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby STP Joint Health Scrutiny Committee  
Durham Heritage Coast Partnership  
Durham Villages Regeneration Limited

Easington Colliery Regeneration Partnership  
Easington Social Welfare Centre  
East Durham Business Service  
English Heritage - Historic Environment Local Management  
Health and Wellbeing Board  
Henry Smith's Charity  
Horden Regeneration Partnership

Industrial Communities Alliance

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee of North East Local Authorities

Lanchester Bowling Club  
Laurel Avenue Community Association  
Local Access Forum  
Local Government Association  
Lord Crewe's Durham Educational Foundation - Representative Trustees

Middleton Plus Development Trust  
Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee

National Association of Councillors  
National Railway Museum at Shildon  
Newbiggin and District Village Hall Association

Newcastle International Airport Local Authority Holding Company Limited  
Newcastle International Airport Consultative Committee  
NEWCO  
North East Combined Authority- Audit and Standards Committee  
North East Combined Authority- Economic Development and Regeneration Board  
North East Combined Authority- Leadership Board  
North East Combined Authority - Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
North East Combined Authority and North of Tyne Combined Authority - North East Joint Transport Audit Committee  
North East Combined Authority and North of Tyne Combined Authority - North East Joint Transport Committee  
North East Combined Authority and North of Tyne Combined Authority - North East Joint Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
North East Disability Resource Centre  
North East First Credit Union  
North East Local Enterprise Partnership  
North East Purchasing Organisation  
North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority  
North Eastern Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO)  
North Eastern Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO) - Executive Committee  
North of England Reserve Forces and Cadets Association  
North Pennines AONB Partnership  
North Regional Brass Band Trust  
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust Council of Governors  
Northern ICS/ICP Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and North Durham STP Joint Health Scrutiny Committee  
Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Path to Excellence Phase 2 Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
PATROL (Parking and Traffic Regulations outside London) Adjudication Joint Committee  
Pelton Fell Community Partnership  
Police and Crime Panel  
Project Genesis

Roseberry Grange Golf Course Committee  
Rural Services Network  
Ruth First Educational Trust Executive Committee

Sacriston Community Development Group  
Safe Durham Partnership  
Southern ICS/ICP Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education  
Stanhope Hartwell Educational Foundation

Teesdale Development Company Limited

Teesdale Village Halls Consortium  
Teesside International Airport  
Teesside International Airport Consultative Committee  
The Bow Trust (Durham) Ltd  
Thrislington Quarry Liaison Committee  
Trimdon Community College Association

United Charities of Romaldkirk  
Upper Teesdale Community Association

Visit County Durham

Wear Valley Women's Aid Limited  
Weardale Open Air Swimming Pool Association  
Witton Gilbert Educational Foundation (formerly Jane Finney Trust)



## **Appendix E**

### **Members' Allowances**

**Schedule of outside organisations which pay travelling and subsistence allowances directly to Members for attendance at meetings convened by the organisation, subject to the Members' attendance having been authorised.**

North East Regional Employers' Organisation Committees (for further details see Appendix H, paragraph 3)
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## **Appendix F**

### **Members' Allowances**

**Schedule of outside organisations which are recharged by the County Council in respect of attendance allowance paid to Members for attendance at meetings convened by the organisation, subject to the Members' attendance having been authorised.**

Association of North East Councils North East Regional Employers' Organisation
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## Appendix G

### Association of North East Councils Members' Allowances Scheme

#### 1. Eligible Members

Those eligible for the ANEC scheme are representatives of member authorities at the meetings of the Association, Executive and Standing Committees and the Regional Assembly.

#### 2. Approved Duties

For the purposes of the Association's scheme, approved duties include:

- attendance at meetings of the Association, Executive and Standing Committees and the Regional Assembly;
- duties carried out by Members as the Association's appointed representatives on any public body, charity, voluntary body or other body formed for a public purpose (and not for the personal benefit of its members) except where such remuneration would be prohibited by another enactment;
- attendance on behalf of the Association at briefing meetings, Chair's meetings and at meetings with Ministers, Government Departments or other bodies.

#### 3. Rate of Allowance 2021/22

An allowance of £22.00 for a twenty-four hour period will be payable, irrespective of the number of duties undertaken.

Travelling and subsistence allowance in respect of attendance at the meetings outlined in paragraph 2 above will be reimbursed by the County Council.

#### 4. Payment Arrangements

The County Council will meet the cost of attendance allowance initially with subsequent reimbursement from the Association.

The County Council is requested to submit invoices monthly, or for longer periods in arrears, to the Association. Each invoice should be supported by a schedule which sets out the following details:

- name of Association representative
- dates of approved duties
- detail of approved duties
- amount of claim

The County Council will be responsible for making the appropriate returns to the Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

## Appendix H

### North East Regional Employers' Organisation Members' Allowances Scheme

#### 1. Eligible Members

Those eligible for the North East Regional Employers' Organisation Scheme are representatives of member authorities at meetings of the full North East Regional Employers' Organisation, Councils and Committees.

#### 2. Approved Duties

For the purposes of the Organisation's scheme, approved duties include attendance at meetings of the full North East Regional Employers' Organisation, Councils and Committees.

#### 3. Rate of Allowance 2019/20

An allowance of £21.00 for a twenty-four hour period will be payable, irrespective of the number of duties undertaken.

Members who attend **ALL** meetings of North East Regional Employers' Organisation Committees will be reimbursed the necessary travelling and subsistence expenses, in cash, by the North East Regional Employers' Organisation.

Members who **DO NOT** attend **ALL** meetings of North East Regional Employers' Organisation Committees will be reimbursed travelling and subsistence allowances by the County Council.

#### 4. Payment Arrangements

The County Council will meet the cost of attendance allowance initially with subsequent reimbursement from the Organisation.

The County Council is requested to submit invoices, in arrears, to the Association. Each invoice should be supported by a schedule which sets out the following details:

- name of Member
- date
- association/council/committee attended

The County Council will be responsible for making the appropriate returns to the Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

## Appendix I

### Local Government Association Members' Allowances Scheme

#### Introduction

1. The Constitution of the Local Government Association empowers the LGA Executive to establish a scheme for payments to members attending meetings and other approved duties of the Local Government Association and in the light of independent advice to make payments to office holders of the Association and such other members as may be specified in recognition of duties carried out on the Association's behalf.
2. In June 1998, the Management Sub-Committee of the LGA appointed an Independent Panel to consider the existing arrangements and to establish a framework on which a suitable scheme for adoption by the Association could be based. The LGA accepted the principles on which the Panel's recommendations were based, and the recommendations themselves, and formally adopted the recommended scheme with the full support of all political parties represented on the Association.
3. The scheme has now been independently reviewed to reflect the changes to the member structure agreed by the General Assembly in July 2004. The proposed changes were agreed by the LGA Executive on 29 July 2004. The revised scheme is set out in the following paragraphs.

#### Key Features of the Scheme

- Members of all bodies listed in the Annex to the Scheme are paid an allowance reflecting both the time which might be spent and the level of responsibility involved in carrying out these posts (payments agreed by the LGA are set out below).
- The LGA does not pay Travel and Subsistence for attendance at its own meetings (i.e. Boards, Panels, Policy Review Groups, Task Groups), with the exception of the Chair, 2 Vice chair's and 4 Deputy Chair's of the Association; and the Chair's of the LGA Boards.
- The LGA does not pay Travel and Subsistence for General Assembly, conferences, seminars, etc. where members are representing their local authorities; and
- Allowances are index-linked to the principal local government pay settlement.

## Appendix J Motor Conference

### Motor Conference

Motor Conference is the body that represents members of ABI transacting motor insurance business and the motor syndicates of Lloyd's Motor Underwriters Association (LMUA). Motor Conference is representative of some 98% of the motor insurance business transacted in the UK. Many of ABI's activities – for example, representations to Government – are carried out under the auspices of Motor Conference.

A number of undertakings have been given on behalf of all members of Motor Conference to various bodies e.g. Government Departments, local authorities and voluntary organisations. The undertakings allow an individual with motor insurance which includes use for personal business to use their own vehicle for the business of their employer. They also provide that the receipt of a mileage allowance will not constitute use for "hire or reward". This is to ensure that individuals in receipt of such an allowance continue to be covered under their insurance policy, notwithstanding any general exclusion of hire and reward use.

Please note that there may be a small number of insurance policies issued by certain insurers that are covered by the undertakings. To check whether any individual insurer not currently listed is a subscriber, contact [motor@abi.org.uk](mailto:motor@abi.org.uk)

To check whether your insurer is a member of the Association of British Insurers please click this link

[Member directory ABI](#)

## Sample

Dear Sirs

Motor Policy No. \_\_\_\_\_

It is hereby declared and agreed that the policy, which permits the use of the vehicle by the Policyholder in person in connection with their business, shall be deemed to permit such use of the vehicle on the business of the employer and the receipt of an allowance from such employer for such use or in respect of the carriage by them of official passengers shall not be deemed for the purpose of the policy to constitute use hiring or for the carriage of passengers for hire or reward.

We will indemnify Durham County Council in the terms of the Third Party section of the Policy in respect of such use provided that:

- (a) this indemnity does not apply in connection with a vehicle belonging to Durham County Council
- (b) Durham County Council is not entitled to indemnity under any other policy
- (c) Durham County Council shall as though it were the Policyholder observe fulfil and be subject to the terms and exceptions and conditions of the Policy insofar as they can apply.

Yours faithfully

## Appendix K

### Members' Parental Leave Policy

#### Introduction

This Policy sets out Members' entitlement to maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave and relevant allowances.

The objective of the policy is to ensure that insofar as possible Members are able to take appropriate leave at the time of birth or adoption, that both parents are able to take leave, and that reasonable and adequate arrangements are in place to provide cover for portfolio-holders and others in receipt of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) during any period of leave taken.

Improved provision for new parents will contribute towards increasing the diversity of experience, age and background of local authority councillors. It will also assist with retaining experienced councillors – particularly women – and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it. The Parental Leave Policy constitutes best practice and will be reviewed.

#### 1. Leave Periods

##### Maternity Leave

- 1.1 Members giving birth are entitled to up to 6 months maternity leave from the due date, with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement if required.
- 1.2 In addition, where the birth is premature, the Member is entitled to take leave during the period between the date of the birth and the due date in addition to the 6 months' period. In such cases any leave taken to cover prematurity of 28 days or less shall be deducted from any extension beyond the initial 6 months.
- 1.3 In exceptional circumstances, and only in cases of prematurity of 29 days or more, additional leave may be taken by agreement, and such exceptional leave shall not be deducted from the total 52-week entitlement.

##### Paternity Leave

- 1.4 Members shall be entitled to take a minimum of 2 weeks paternity leave if they are the biological father or nominated carer of their partner/spouse following the birth/adoption of their child(ren).



### **Shared Parental Leave**

- 1.5 A Member who has made Shared Parental Leave arrangements through their employment is requested to advise the Council of these at the earliest possible opportunity. Every effort will be made to replicate such arrangements in terms of leave from Council.
- 1.6 Where both parents are Members, leave may be shared up to a maximum of 24 weeks for the first six months and 26 weeks for any leave agreed thereafter, up to a maximum of 50 weeks. Special and exceptional arrangements may be made in cases of prematurity.

### **Adoption Leave**

- 1.7 A Member who adopts a child through an approved adoption agency shall be entitled to take up to six months adoption leave from the date of placement, with the option to extend up to 52 weeks by agreement if required.

### **Leave Arrangements**

- 1.8 Any Member who takes maternity, shared parental or adoption leave is still required under the Local Government Act 1972 to attend a meeting of the Council within a six-month period unless the Council Meeting agrees to an extended leave of absence prior to the expiration of that six-month period.
- 1.9 Any Member intending to take maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave will be responsible for ensuring that they comply with the relevant notice requirements of the Council, both in terms of the point at which the leave starts and the point at which they return.
- 1.10 Any Member taking leave should ensure that they respond to reasonable requests for information as promptly as possible, and that they keep their Group Leader (if applicable) and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services informed and updated in relation to intended dates of return and requests for extension of leave.

## **2. Basic Allowance**

- 2.1 All Members shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full whilst on maternity, paternity or adoption leave.

## **3. Special Responsibility Allowances**

- 3.1 Members entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) shall continue to receive their allowance in full in the case of maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave.

- 3.2 Where a replacement is appointed to cover the period of absence that person shall receive an SRA on a pro-rata basis for the period of the temporary appointment.
- 3.3 The payment of Special Responsibility Allowances, whether to the primary SRA holder or a replacement, during a period of maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave shall continue for a period of six months; or until the date of the next Annual General Meeting of the Council; or until the date when the Member taking leave is up for election (whichever is soonest). At such a point, the position will be reviewed, and will be subject to a possible extension for a further six-month period.
- 3.4 Should a Member appointed to replace the Member on maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave already hold a remunerated position, the ordinary rules relating to payment of more than one Special Responsibility Allowances shall apply.
- 3.5 Unless the Member taking leave is removed from their post at an Annual General Meeting of the Council whilst on leave, or unless the Party to which they belong loses control of the Council during their leave period, they shall return at the end of their leave period to the same post, or to an alternative post with equivalent status and remuneration which they held before the leave began.

#### **4. Resigning from Office and Elections**

- 4.1 If a Member decides not to return at the end of their maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave they must notify the Council at the earliest possible opportunity. All allowances will cease from the effective resignation date.
- 4.2 If an election is held during the Member's maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave and they are not re-elected, or decide not to stand for re-election, their basic allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance if appropriate will cease from the Monday after the election date when they would technically leave office.

#### **5. Practical Arrangements**

- 5.1 A Member intending to take parental leave must in the first instance inform their group leader (if applicable) and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services in writing. Members are asked to provide notice of their intention to take parental leave in accordance with the timescales set out below:
- (a) Pregnant Members should give notice by no later than 28 days before they want to commence their maternity leave. Confirmation of the pregnancy and the expected week of childbirth is usually via a MAT B1

- certificate (a form given to a woman by their doctor or midwife after the 20<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy and shows the expected date of childbirth). As soon as practicable after the birth they should notify the same of the baby's date of birth in writing.
- (b) A Member who is a primary adopter should give notice within 7 days of being told they have been matched with a child and provide confirmation of the adoption through the provision of a matching certificate, and the date the child is to be placed with the Member.
  - (c) For paternity leave a Member should give notice by the 15th week before the Expected week of childbirth.
  - (d) A Member who is intending to take Shared parental leave must advise of their intention at least 8 weeks before.
- 5.2 Any Member taking leave for more than a 2-month period must meet with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Group Leader (if applicable) to discuss practical issues including how to keep in touch and about expected dates of return.
- 5.3 The Director of Legal and Democratic Services will ensure that business support and payroll are informed of arrangements to ensure that allowances are paid in accordance with the Policy.
- 5.4 Any requests for special or exceptional circumstances, or extensions in line with the policy will be agreed by the Director of legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council, and the group leader (if applicable).
- 5.5 For single Member wards it will be the responsibility of the group leader to allocate another Member to undertake a 'caretaking' role, in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services. The 'caretaking' role will be allocated to a neighbouring divisional Member as far as possible. If a Member is independent and not part of a group, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services will liaise with that member and any other independent Members as to who is best placed to take on the "caretaking" role.
- 5.6 Appointments to cover areas of special responsibility whilst a Member is on parental leave will be made in accordance with the relevant procedures for appointments.

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**Appendix 3 – Comparisons of the Council’s basic allowance payment with those of other similar **mainly rural** authorities**

Name	Basic Allowance		Electorate	Basic Allowance per '000s of electorate	
	£	Ranking*		£	Ranking*
North Yorkshire	17,000	1	478,427	36	10
Cornwall	16,378	2	431,186	38	9
Buckinghamshire	13,532	7	412,797	33	12
Durham	13,300	8th	390,322	34	11th
Wiltshire	15,868	3	382,730	41	7
Cheshire East	12,851	10	310,618	41	7
Dorset	14,689	4	297,452	49	4
East Riding	13,765	6	270,008	51	3
North Northamptonshire	12,500	12	264,500	47	6
Cheshire West and Chester	14,453	5	262,603	55	2
Shropshire	12,000	13	250,146	48	5
Central Bedfordshire	13,203	9	223,722	59	1

**Rankings:** Highest = 1, Lowest = 13

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<b>Designation</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>% of Basic Allowance</b>	<b>SRA Amount (£)</b>
Chair of the County Council	13300	50%	6650
Vice-Chair of the County Council	13300	25%	3325
Leader of the County Council	13300	275%	36575
Deputy Leader of the County Council	13300	150%	19950
Cabinet Member (x8)	13300	100%	13300
Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management	13300	100%	13300
Vice-Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny	13300	60%	7980
Chair of Appeals and Complaints Committee	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Appeals and Complaints Committee	13300	10%	1330
Chair of Audit Committee	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Audit Committee	13300	10%	1330
Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel	13300	10%	1330
Chair of Highways Committee	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Highways Committee	13300	10%	1330
Chair of General Licensing and Registration Committee	13300	25%	3325
Vice-Chair of General Licensing and Registration Committee	13300	12%	1662
Chair of Statutory Licensing Committee	13300	25%	3325
Vice-Chair of Statutory Licensing Committee x 2	13300	12%	1662
Chair of General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee	13300	25%	3325
Chair of General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee	13300	25%	3325
Chair of General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee	13300	25%	3325
Chair of County Planning Committee	13300	25%	3325
Vice-Chair of County Planning Committee	13300	12%	1662
Chair of Area Planning Committee (North Durham)	13300	25%	3325
Vice-Chair of Area Planning Committee (North Durham)	13300	12%	1662
Chair of Area Planning Committee (Central and East	13300	25%	3325
Vice-Chair of Area Planning Committee (Central and East	13300	12%	1662
Chair of Area Planning Committee (South and West)	13300	25%	3325
Vice-Chair of Area Planning Committee (South and West)	13300	12%	1662
Chair of Pension Fund Committee	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Pension Fund Committee	13300	10%	1330
Chair of Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Children and Young People's Scrutiny	13300	10%	1330
Chair of Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny	13300	10%	1330
Chair of Environment and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Environment and Sustainable Communities	13300	10%	1330
Chair of Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee	13300	10%	1330
Chair of Adults, Wellbeing and Health Scrutiny Committee	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Adults, Wellbeing and Health Scrutiny	13300	10%	1330
Chair of Standards Committee	13300	20%	2660
Vice-Chair of Standards Committee	13300	10%	1330

Where an Opposition Group has 20% or more of the Council Members allowance is £6650, where Group has less than 20% membership allowance is £3325

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# IRP Questionnaire

\* Required

## Basic Allowance

1. The current Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances were set in 2009 and have remained unchanged over the last 15 years following decisions taken by Council., and often contrary to recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel. The **basic allowance** for councillors is intended to recognise the time commitment of the role including (but not limited to) travel to meetings, meeting preparation, attendance, meeting with officers and residents and case work. Government guidance also states the role of an elected councillor must in part be viewed as an unpaid voluntary service. On the basis of the above, do you think the basic allowance for the role of a Durham County Councillor is?

\*

- Significantly too low
- Too Low
- About right
- Too High
- Significantly too high

2. Does the current basic allowance affect **your** decision to stand for re-election? \*

Yes

No

3. Do you think the current basic allowance would deter a **prospective candidate** from standing for election? \*

Yes

No

4. How many hours per week on average do you spend on **Basic** Council duties? This does not apply to duties you undertake for which you receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) \*

Less than 5 hours

5 - 10 hours

10 - 15 hours

15 - 20 hours

20 - 25 hours

25 - 30 hours

30 - 35 hours

35 - 40 hours

More than 40 hours

5. The elections in 2025 will see the Council Size reduce from 126 to 98 Members, the majority of Electoral Divisions change and the number of Divisions reduced. Do you think the workload of Members will increase? \*

- Yes
- No
- Remain the same

6. Why do you believe this to be the case?

7. We have undertaken annual reviews of the Members Allowance Scheme for many years, however, the Regulations allow for Schemes to be reviewed four yearly (even though the council must agree the scheme annually). Do you want to continue with engaging the IRP on an annual basis or convene the IRP on a four yearly basis?

- Yes - Engage with the IRP on an annual basis

8. The Regulations allow for annual indexed uplifts to be applied. Do you think this is the correct approach or should the allowances / recommendations of the IRP apply for four years?

- Yes - annual indexed uplifts to be applied
- No - the recommendations should apply for four years
- Unsure

## Special Responsibility Allowances

9. Are you currently in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance? \*

Yes

No

10. Do you feel that the level of Special Responsibility Allowance that you currently receive is commensurate to the role that you carry out? \*

Yes

No

11. If 'No' please provide more detail \*

## General

12. Please indicate your Gender \*

- Male
- Female
- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

13. How many terms have you served as a Councillor? \*

- 2021-2025 was my first term of office
- More than the current term

14. Do you have any other comments/observations to make on Members Allowances generally? \*



The current Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances were set in 2009 and have remained unchanged over the last 15 years following decisions taken by Council., and often contrary to recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel. The basic allowance for councillors is intended to recognise the time commitment of the role including (but not limited to) travel to meetings, meeting preparation, attendance, meeting with officers and residents and case work. Government guidance also states the role of an elected councillor must in part be viewed as an unpaid voluntary service. On the basis of the above, do you think the basic allowance for the role of a Durham County Councillor is?

Significantly too low	27
Too low	35
About right	10
Too high	1
Significantly too high	0

Does the current basic allowance affect **your** decision to stand for re-election?

Yes	29
No	44

Do you think the current basic allowance would deter a **prospective candidate** from standing for election?

Yes	56
No	17

How many hours per week on average do you spend on **Basic** Council duties? This does not apply to duties you undertake for which you receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)

Less than 5 hours	0
5 - 10 hours	0
10 - 15 hours	7
15 - 20 hours	15
20 - 25 hours	18
25 - 30 hours	14
30 - 35 hours	5
35 - 40 hours	11
More than 40 hours	3

The elections in 2025 will see the Council Size reduce from 126 to 98 Members, the majority of Electoral Divisions change and the number of Divisions reduced. Do you think the workload of Members will increase?

Yes	69
No	1
Remain the same	3

Why do you believe this to be the case?

Comments	No.
More residents for each member to represent	25
Caseload and issues will increase	25
Geographical dispersed villages within the Division involves more work (time and commitment)	22
Increased number of more residents/communities/town parish meetings	11
Housebuilding	3
Fewer members will also result in the remaining having to be on more committees	2
Less staff available at the council mean more time trying to find the officer you need to help. Delays and increases pressure on Members	2
reorganisational changes of AAPs will result in more administration work for Officers and Members and drive down efficiency	2
New area which will take time to understand areas of residents	1
Workloads are already busy	1
Neighbourhood Budgets will be stretched	1
The meagre allowance afford to be Councillor means that only retired people, lack of diversity and we have not had in increase since 2009 which in real time is a Drop of 56%.	1
Councillors pay should be linked to staff pay rises so we don't have of voting on allowances each year	1
The council will continue to do the same things with less members, thus we have a greater role in fulfilling our political duties in the council	1
Whilst currently I believe the allowance to be about right I do feel that the reductions that are ahead of us require a review and consideration of an increase	1



We have undertaken annual reviews of the Members Allowance Scheme for many years, however, the Regulations allow for Schemes to be reviewed four yearly (even though the council must agree the scheme annually). Do you want to continue with engaging the IRP on an annual basis or convene the IRP on a four yearly basis?

Yes – Engage with the IRP on an annual basis	43
No - convene the IRP on a four yearly basis	30

The Regulations allow for annual indexed uplifts to be applied. Do you think this is the correct approach or should the allowances / recommendations of the IRP apply for four years?

Yes – Annual uplift to be applied	41
No – the recommendations should apply for 4 years	18
Unsure	7
Other	7

Are you currently in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance?

Yes	38
No	35

Do you feel that the level of Special Responsibility Allowance that you currently receive is commensurate to the role that you carry out?

Yes	24
No	21

Feels low. rather increase the basic councillor allowance than the SRA	1
Increased paperwork which takes considerable time to read	2
In order to better understand the work, site visits are also carried out.	1
The allowance is £50 per week before tax	1
Takes significant number of hours	5
These amounts were considered suitable in 2009, which is now 15 years ago. With inflation and cost of living increases	1

it is no longer possible to suggest that these amounts are appropriate	
Some roles receive less than others but it is still demanding on time and can prevent some Members from seeking these roles due to low allowance.	1
nominal figure compared to the volume of work required for the SRA	1
appropriate amount of allowance and therefore no uplift is required	1
AAPs etc and not receive any extra allowance. This has meant that I've had to come off committees as I've had to prioritise paid work.	1
Should increase along with the basic allowance	1
responsibility add over 10 hours per week, but offers only 10% more allowance. I gave up my position as it simply cost me too much money to accept. I lost too much time and therefore too much opportunity to earn money in my employment to undertake my vice chair role	1
High workload	1

#### Gender

Male	41
Female	30
Woman	0
Man	1
Non-binary	0
Prefer not to say	1

How many terms have you served as a Councillor?

2021-2025 was my first term of office	34
More than the current term	39

Any other comments to make generally?

Allowances should be sent independently at the national level
I think it is time we had an allowance increase

<p>Low allowance is putting off younger people with families and mortgages from becoming a councillor. The job done properly is definitely not part time yet in many cases the allowance works out at lower than minimum wage. Some weeks the workload is higher some lower and you're expected to be available 7 days a week. I have even been contacted on Christmas day</p>
<p>The allowance must at very least become index linked to prevent increases becoming a political pawn</p>
<p>On average members will have 8000 constituents per division this will require equivalent to 40 plus hours a week for members to be able to give full commitment , an allowance should reflect this, if not many will have to hold down full time work and will struggle to commit</p>
<p>Should be part of annual pay review as part of all DCC staff</p>
<p>The allowance is not sufficient to allow all people the opportunity to become a Councillor - it does not allow for equal opportunities. Some Councillors have to hold 1 or 2 other jobs to be able to make ends meet.</p>
<p>In my term of office I have not claimed any travel allowance but with the increase in price of petrol, car insurance, etc. I may consider claiming for this.</p>
<p>Most of my 'office' work is done on an evening at home, this is an extra cost on lighting, heating, etc.</p>
<p>Member broadband allowance. Unreliability of broadband services in my area. I would prefer to use a broadband provider negotiated by the County Council to ensure quality of service."</p>
<p>Overall , I feel that the councillors allowance should be reviewed on a 4 yearly cycle .</p>
<p>Politically any rise of allowance would be frowned upon by the public, for that reason alone many councillors would vote against any rise,</p>
<p>The allowance for Chair and Vice Chair of the council is far too low. The Chair's allowance is less than the Vice Chair of Scrutiny and Vice Chair of the Fire Authority, yet the Chair and Vice Chair do far more work than both of these positions.</p>

<p>I am happy at present but going forward boundary changes should be taken into consideration and the amount of extra work for some as every Division brings its own specific continual problems</p>
<p>It would make more sense if allowances increased by inflation .</p>
<p>I think what needs to be looked at with Boundary Changes to the County Council is the Neighbourhood Budget that councillors hold and with the increase in the size of the ward, should result in an increase in the budget that councillors hold. Feel this would be a better way of spending public money rather than thinking of increasing members allowances.</p>
<p>With receiving the members allowance I personally think that mileage allowance should not be paid.</p>
<p>With radical political change occurring with councillors I call on the committee to conduct a complete reset and review of member's allowances.</p>
<p>Far too low, and the expenses system is not appropriate. We are offered strange allowance towards the costs of things, eg broadband. Some just take this money as a pay rise, but those who need it are not actually going to be able to cover the cost of the service they need. If we are to be able to claim for expenses then they should be set to cover the cost of why they are there.</p>
<p>The role of a local authority councillor is an important one that requires specialist skills, knowledge and personality that involves a large commitment in being available 24/7. The current remuneration should at least match the Living wage therefore recognising the hours, financial and personal sacrifice made in being able to support the community.</p>
<p>We should not have to vote to accept an annual pay rise. The members should have an annual increase the same as most of the country. It's a 'get out' not to include the members in an annual pay increase.</p>
<p>No increase in allowance since the formation of the authority is quite astonishing.</p>
<p>As the council-size is being reduced - we should remain within the current financial envelope but use this as an opportunity to increase the basis allowance. All of the councillors I know are either retired or have another source of income. It is difficult to get new people to</p>

stand for the role in terms of the hours you need to work and also the level of support you receive for the impact on your and on your family. This is particularly important in terms of evening meetings out in the community - and being accessible to your community outside of office hours. I think that the members' basic allowance should be linked to the lowest grade of salaried employees - say 25%/30% less in recognition that the role is not necessarily full time. I think that this could be achieved if SRAs are frozen in light of the reduced number of councillors and would make it a more realistic prospect for younger people to take on this important role.

Members should not have to vote for their allowances, I am not convinced that allowance is any longer the correct wording for it as it is becoming much more of a full time job

Yes the mechanism for setting the members allowance scheme should be administered on a national basis

The members allowances should be commensurate with the increased workload and demand on Cllrs time.

Some councillors may work a lot harder than others

Group Leaders allowance should be reduced for groups with less than 10% of members.

Setting members' allowances will inevitably be difficult, if nothing else because of the current low esteem in which politicians are held by the general public, and of course the fact that this is taxpayers' money and must be spent wisely. However, local authorities need to make standing for office as appealing and inclusive as possible, and there's no escaping the fact that allowances play a role in that. DCC is more likely to attract able councillors from diverse backgrounds if the level of allowances are more commensurate with the work that they will be expected to undertake. The council - and councillors - should not be shy of making this point publicly. That said, it feels wrong that councillors make the ultimate decision about the level of their allowances. In that context, it is good that the outcome of this review will affect the next intake, rather than current members, and I hope that it leads to a net overall saving (given the imminent reduction in members). If recommendations have to be considered by full council in the future, then doing so every four years, and ahead of the next intake that will be affected by decisions, is the best option.

The allowance has not been increased since 2009, so surely an increase is now well overdue.
I have no problem whatsoever with councillors being paid sensible amounts of money.
Allowances for group leaders should be more closely related to group size.
Council group secretaries should also receive a SRA, they do a lot of extra work.
Some added role allowances are too high, and some vice chairs allowances are unnecessary.
Member's allowance will always be difficult as you are voting on your own behalf an outside body should set the allowance
Should be based on the work done by the recipient.
I think it is a sensitive subject with the general public, I think it would be fair to have us to be paid at minimum wage for the average hours worked, no higher than that.
To keep a standard you need to make sure members are paid more fairly
Government need to completely overhaul this as it is completely inaccessible for anyone with caring responsibilities, disabilities and those wanting to still have a career/be able to provide for themselves/family.
I have agreed with keeping the allowance fixed in the past but things are changing and to attract working age people that can commit their time effectively this is the right time to review and consider an increase.
what I get paid and the hours I work, it amounts to a pittance , roughly works out £4 an hour
It is very difficult for councillors to openly state that they think the allowances are too low, but after 3 1/2 years on this council I have found that the stress of the role is not worth it.
Haven't had an increase since 2009, you need £1.56 now to buy what £1 did in 2009
22% reduction in number of Cllrs mean that on average we have 22% more residents and so 22% more case work, could be more depending on how your boundaries have altered.
Meagre allowances mean only retired people can afford to be Cllrs, lack of diversity etc
Cllrs pay should be linked to staff pay rises so we don't have the fiasco of voting on our pay rises every year.

They should be consistent with wards of similar size and level of responsibility in other authorities

I do not think that members should have to agree their own allowances and that they should follow a similar process to MPs

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## Appendix 7 - Unitary Authorities – Local Government Boundary Review

Review Authority		Council size before review	Council size after review	No. diff	% diff	Basic (before LGR)	Basic (after LGR)	Current Basic (2024/25)	Population
Blackburn with Darwen	UA	64	51	13	-20%	5,393	7,000	7,667	155,762
Buckinghamshire	UA	147	97	50	-34%	13,458	Not set	13,525	560,409
Cornwall**	UA	123	87	36	-29%	15,130	17,496	17,496	575,413
County Durham	UA	126	98	28	-22%	13,300	Not set	13,300	528,127
North Northamptonshire	UA	78	68	10	-13%	14,000	Not set	14,000	363,408
North Somerset	UA	61	50	11	-18%	8,193	9,332	9,666	219,145
West Northamptonshire	UA	93	76	17	-18%	16,053	Not set	16,053	429,013
Cumberland (New)	UA	N/A	46	N/A	N/A	N/A	14,500	14,500	275,390
Westmoreland and Furness (New)	UA	N/A	63	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13000	227,600

\*\* comparator unitary authority (similar population size)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background to the Independent Remuneration Panels' (the Panel) 2024 Review**

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require that an authority shall make a scheme in respect of the succeeding financial year on or before 31st March each year. Under these regulations, Councils are required to establish and maintain an independent remuneration panel to provide the local authority with advice on its scheme and the amounts to be paid. Local authorities must have regard to this advice.

The report of the Local Government Boundary Commission Review, published in November 2023, has led to, probably, the most significant reappraisal of the Council's committee and member responsibilities since 2009. As a consequence of this, the Council was required to request its independent remuneration panel (the Panel) to undertake a wide-ranging review of the Member Allowance Scheme to be implemented with effect from the May 2025 elections. For the present Panel, this has required probably the most wide-ranging review of the Council's scheme since 2009.

This report sets out the work undertaken by the Panel, its conclusions and recommendations. The Council is required to take account of the Panel's recommendations in determining the allowances scheme to be in place from May 2025.

The Council can choose to adopt our recommendations in part or not at all, but it cannot exceed any of the Panel's recommendations without referring the matter back to the Panel.

#### **The basis of the existing scheme of allowances**

The Council was granted unitary authority status following a Local Government Review in 2009. These new responsibilities required a fundamental review of the Council's governance arrangements and allowances scheme. An independent remuneration panel (the 2009 Panel) was appointed to review and make recommendations on the latter. The Council adopted the 2009 Panel's recommendations and the scheme has remained largely unchanged since then.

Subsequent independent review panels have recommended increases to allowances, to reflect inflation. The Council has declined to introduce any of these increases, so the current allowances are the same as those recommended by the 2009 Panel.

## **WHAT THE PANEL HAS REVIEWED**

As part of our overall review, we were asked to consider the following specific matters:

- (a) The impact on members' workload following the Boundary Commission's review in 2023 and consequent effect on the members' basic allowance.
- (b) The categories and numbers of Special Responsibility Allowances
- (c) Adjustments of members' allowances for inflation.
- (d) The Dependent Carers' Allowance payable to members.
- (e) The Travel and Subsistence Allowances payable to members.
- (f) The impact of the introduction of remote/ hybrid meetings on the role of members.

## **THE PANEL'S CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **(a) The impact on members' workload following the Boundary Commission's review in 2023.**

There is no universally agreed job description or widely accepted information that can be used to determine how much time individual members should spend on each of their responsibilities and how changes in member numbers might be reflected in allowances. Nonetheless, the basic responsibilities of local authorities elected members are many and varied, but are common, in principle, across most local authorities.

**Logic** would suggest that the Boundary Commission's recommendation for a 22 percent reduction in elected members, from 126 to 98, is likely to have some impact on individual councillor's workloads; the question for the Panel, in terms of reflecting this in the basic allowance, was by how much?

Against this background, the Panel determined that it needed to address this question by considering the following:

- (i) The Boundary Commission's recommendations and the potential implications for members' workload.
- (ii) The number of the electorate and number of members in the Council's area with those at neighbouring local authorities and other **mainly rural** large

authorities, similar to Durham.

(iii) The report of the Council's Corporate Working Group (CWG) on addressing the Boundary Commission's recommendations.

(iv) The results of a survey of Council members' views on the workload impact of the reduction in their numbers and other related issues.

The Panel recognised that each of these, in isolation would not provide a definitive answer to the question of whether, or by how much, members' constituency workloads would increase after May 2025. However, the Panel believes that it could obtain a clearer picture by looking at all this evidence together.

The outcomes of the Panel's deliberations are summarised below.

(i) The Boundary Commission's recommendations and the potential implications for members' workload

The Commission's reason for conducting the review was that some members currently represent significantly many more or fewer electors than others. Its aim was to achieve electoral equality, not only in the near future but also over the following five years.

The Boundary Commission concluded that the number of electoral divisions in Durham should reduce from 63 to 51, with associated boundary changes, and the number of elected members should reduce from 126 to 98, a reduction of 22%.

The Panel quantified the impact that the Commission's recommendations will have on members' constituency representation - see Table 1:

**Table 1 – Impact on members' community representation role of the reduction in the number of Durham's elected members**

*Following the reduction in member numbers at the May 2025 elections, members' constituency representation role will increase significantly*

County Durham's electorate	391,146*	
No. of Members - now and from May 2025	126	98*
Average number of electors per member – now and from May 2025	3,056	3,991*

% increase in electors represented per member in 2025		+30.5%
-------------------------------------------------------	--	--------

\* Figures from Boundary Commission’s report.

(ii) Comparison of the number of the electorate and number of members in the Council’s area, with those at neighbouring local authorities and mainly-rural large authorities.

We obtained data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in order to calculate broad indicators of Council members’ average constituency representation workload compared with that of neighbouring local authorities and other mainly – rural large local authorities. The results are summarised below in Table 2:

**Table 2 - Durham members’ constituency representation compared with other LAS – Summary**

*Following the May 2025 elections, the Council’s members average constituency representation will become higher than most of the sample local authorities*

Comparison Groups:	The current 126 members average number of electors represented is:	After the May 2025 elections, the 98 members’ representation will be:
6 large NE LAs	More than 5 of the other 6	More than all the other 6
12 large mainly – rural LAs	Less than 11 of the other 12	<b>More than most of the other 12</b>

(All data obtained from the ONS website)

- See Appendix A for neighbouring local authorities’ detailed data
- See Appendix B for large mainly – rural local authorities’ detailed data

This data illustrates the increase in this aspect of Council members’ responsibilities. In this context, it is also relevant to compare the Council members’ basic allowance with that of the group of other mainly – rural ‘shire

county-type' authorities used in the above tables and Appendices A and B. The detailed comparison is set out in Appendix C, with the main messages summarised in Table 3 below:

**Table 3 – Comparison of basic allowances of 13 mainly rural authorities - Summary**

*Durham's basic allowance is lower than most of this group on both criteria*

Measure	How Council members' allowance compares:
<b>Basic</b> allowance £	Durham has the 8 <sup>th</sup> lowest BA of the group
Basic allowance per 1,000 electors	Durham has the 11 <sup>th</sup> lowest of the group

See Appendix C for the detailed data.

(iii) The report of the Council's Corporate Working Group (CWG) on addressing the Boundary Commission's recommendations

The Council designated the CWG to review the Council's governance arrangements and to make recommendations that will achieve the required changes recommended by the Boundary Commission, on a timely basis.

The CWG's main recommendation was that the size of most Council committees should be reduced by 22%, to reflect there will be fewer members available to attend these committees. The aim is to maintain proper governance and accountability, such as the required minimum attendances to satisfy quorum requirements.

The CWG's report also considered in further detail relating to the membership and frequency of meeting of the Council's various regulatory committees. The Panel was invited to comment on the CWG's proposals. We found that, during the nine months from January to September 2024, most diarised meetings of the General Licensing and Registration Sub-Committee's were cancelled as there was no business to consider. The panel noted that a reduction in the number of Full Council meetings could be achieved with a realignment of business and will trial a reduction from nine to seven meetings initially. A reduction in these meetings may help ease the burden of workloads.

In view of these findings:



*The Panel recommends that the Council should review the frequency of meetings and membership of the regulatory committees to achieve the optimum position between business needs and members' workload.*

The Panel also understands that the Council is to further consider the Boundary Commission's suggestion that more work might be delegated to officers. This could reduce members' workload to some extent. The Panel considers that the CWG has developed sound proposals for adopting the Council's governance structure to embrace the Boundary Commission's recommendations. The Panel is interested to hear how these proposals are embedded and working.

(iv) The results of a survey of Council members' views on the workload impact of the reduction in their numbers and other related issues

The Panel and officers agreed that it would be relevant and timely to hear from members on issues arising from the Boundary Commission's review. Officers sent a short survey to all members and 72 (57%) of the members have replied.

The responses to the questions in the survey that relate directly to the Panel's work show that:

- 94% of members think their workload will increase after May 2025, as a consequence of fewer members.
- 84 % of members think the current basic allowance is too low/ significantly too low.
- Members spend, on average, about 24 hours a week on council business (excluding any work related to their SRA positions). (74% of members spend 30 hours or less a week on council business (excluding any work related to their SRA positions) and 26 % spend over 30 hours a week).
- Most councillors (59%) think the Panel should continue to meet annually to review the allowances scheme and most (68%) of members who responded to this question, think allowances should be uplifted annually.

The Panel values members responses on the issues raised in the survey and has taken them into account in its considerations.

## Summary

When taken together, the sections (i) to (iv) provide a consistent pattern that supports the common-sense view that the significant reduction in members

after the May 2025 elections will lead to an increased workload for the members who are elected. The Panel accepts that it is not yet possible to forecast accurately the extent of the impact on members and that more work is needed on this as the new ways of working become embedded.

*Taking account of all of the above, the Panel recommends that:*

- (i) Following the May 2025 elections, the basic allowance of £13,300 is increased by an interim 5% to £13,965, to reflect, for the time being at least, the reduction in the number of members from 126 to 98. **This is the recommendation of a majority of the Panel members.***
- (ii) This recommended increase in the basic allowance is not to be reflected in a linked increase in SRAs, as the increase relates only to members' responsibilities covered by the basic allowance.*
- (iii) The IRP, supported by officers, will undertake a further review of the impact on members' workload of the various changes brought about as a consequence of the boundary review, including the new the committee timetables, smarter ways of working, the experiences of members under the new arrangements and of the development of hybrid meetings. The timing of this review to be agreed between the Panel and officers.*
- (iv) The Council should arrange to collect data on the 2025 elections to enable it to assess whether or not the number of candidates coming forward for election is sufficient to ensure that local democracy is being adequately served.*

#### **(b)The categories and numbers of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA).**

The legislation supporting local authority members' allowances and subsistence payments was enacted in 2003. Broadly, local authorities can determine which posts should be deemed to have significant responsibilities and so become entitled to an SRA. The types of posts that might attract an SRA are set out in the legislation but the legislation does not identify or limit the number of these posts in any single local authority. However, guidance supporting the legislation states that where more than 50 per cent of posts attract an SRA, this brings into question how *special* the responsibilities may be.

The posts with SRAs attached were a key subject in the report by the 2009 IRP. In its report, the 2009 IRP set out the case for each SRA post. The Panel has taken full account of the 2009 IRP's work, including its recommendation that each SRA should be calculated with reference to the recommend basic allowance of £13,300 expressed as a percentage that allowance. However, given the above recommendation for the increase in basic allowance to not be applied to SRAs, this link is removed.

This is the first significant change to the basic structure of the Council's scheme of allowances, since 2009. The Panel considers that this, and other SRA – related matters, should prompt a wider review of SRAs, as follows.

As background to its deliberations, the Panel started with very detailed information about the SRAs paid in 17 NE local authorities. This information is all in the public domain. It shows that there is considerable variance across the region in both the numbers and amounts of SRAs. This is demonstrated by the fact that the average costs to local constituents of the allowances schemes in these 17 authorities varies substantially. There is no reliable yardstick to say what is the optimum level. Against this background, the Panel referred to the 2009 Panel's work and discussed with officers the number and categories of SRAs now.

The CWG invited the Panel to consider the following SRA-related issues:

- the proposal to reduce the number of vice-chairs on the Statutory Licencing Committee from 2 to 1. As both these posts have SRAs, the proposal would reduce the number of SRAs by one. The Panel supports this proposal.
- The anomalous position that the three chairs of the General Licencing and Registration Sub-Committee all receive SRAs but none of the three chairs of the Statutory Licencing Sub-committee receive a SRA.

The Panel also considered the following:

- the number of Council SRAs will be close to the 50 per cent level after the 2025 election, which should perhaps trigger a review;
- the present policy of assigning SRAs is that leaders of opposition groups with more than 25 members receive £6,650 SRA and those with groups with fewer than 25 members receive £3,350. This creates anomalies and inequalities; and
- the changing complexity and frequency of regulatory and planning committees warrants further review.

A further consideration was that the Panel felt that its recommendation to increase only the basic allowance in recognition of an increased workload after the 2025 elections should not result in a similar uplift to all SRAs. As mentioned on the previous page, the Panel considers that this link be discontinued following the 2025 elections;

Against this background,

*The Panel recommends that:*

- (i) *The Panel and officers review the SRAs, to address the above issues and any others arising during the review.*
- (ii) ***The Council freezes the categories and amounts SRAs until this review is completed;***

Finally, on SRAs, the legislation requires that at least one post with an SRA attached must be held by a member of a minority group. The Panel is satisfied that the Council meets this requirement because leaders of minority groups are entitled to an SRA. (The number of SRA post and the number of members receiving an SRA to be added in here)

### **(c) Adjustments of members' allowances for inflation**

The 2003 legislation enables local authorities to opt to increase allowances annually in accordance with a specified inflation – linked index. The legislation also provides that if the only factor being considered in an annual review of allowances is the application of an agreed inflationary index, there is no need to involve its IRP the review.

The Regulations also requires that the application of such an index must be reviewed at no more than four-yearly intervals. If a local authority adopts this approach, it retains the option to apply the whole, part or none of the actual increase in the chosen index.

The benefits of such an approach are that it provides a more certain basis for future budgeting and it relieves officers of the time involved in annual meetings with the IRP.

If the Council adopts this approach, there are several potential indices it could choose. Some are related to prices inflation and others to pay inflation; some are very straight – forward, in being widely recognised and single, published figures, other are more complex and can involve variations in terms of ranges of indices within a broad heading.

Should the Council propose other changes that have an impact on its allowances scheme, a review by the Panel could be required.

*The Panel recommends that:*

- (i) *the basic allowance is increased for 2025, with refence to the September 2024 CPI rate of 1.7%*
- (ii) *the Council should link future increases to the CPI for a period of up to 4 years, as permitted by legislation.*

### **(d)The Dependent Carers' Allowance payable to members;**

The Council has determined that this allowance should be based on the hourly rate set out in the requirements on the National Living/ Minimum Wage. This

Low Wage Commission estimates that the hourly rate will increase in April 2025, by 5.5%, from £11.82 an hour to £12.39 an hour.

No claims for this allowance were made in 2023/24.

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*The Panel recommends that the maximum rate payable will be increased each April in line with the national living wage at age 21.*

### **(e)The Travel and Subsistence Allowances payable to members**

Apart from a reduction in the car mileage allowance rate in 2014/15, the travel and subsistence allowances have not changed since the start of the new unitary authority in 2009. There is very little national guidance on what the members' travel and subsistence allowances should be.

We understand that a large proportion of Council members' travel and associated arrangements are managed by the Council's Business Support Team, through contracts that enable the Council to take advantage of competitive rates. This means that few claims for allowances expenses are made to members.

We reviewed information on a small sample of recent travel and subsistence cost compared with the Council's allowances for such cost. Of the sample of 20 occurrences, the cost of 15 were below the amounts included in the Council's allowances scheme and the other five were in places known to be comparatively expensive, such as London. This indicated to us that the Council's approach is cost-effective;

The Panel considers that the current arrangements are working well and so has no further comments to make.

### **(f)The impact of the introduction of remote/ hybrid meetings on role of Members.**

Legislation enabling Councils to choose whether or not meetings are conducted remotely e.g. using such facilities as TEAMS or others. We agreed with officers that it is premature for the Panel to consider this proposal now but it may be considered at a future review.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Panel wishes to record its thanks for the continuous and professional support Council officers have provided to the Panel during its wide-ranging review. In particular, the Panel wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources, Michael Turnbull, Democratic Services Manager and Helen Bradley, Director of Legal & Democratic Services.



**Appendix A – Durham members’ average constituency representation workload based on electors per member compared with that of large neighbouring local authorities (2022 data)**

*Durham’s members represent the second highest number of electors on average based on the present number of members and the most, on average, based on the post – 2025 elections number of members.*

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>No. of Electors ('000s)</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>	<b>Constituency representation indicator (Electors per member)</b>
<b>Durham - present</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>3,088</b>
<b>Durham – from May 2025</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>3,971</b>
Authority A	251	67	3,742
Authority B	143	66	2,163
Authority C	192	78	2,461
Authority D	115	54	2,132
Authority E	156	60	2,607
Authority F	207	75	2,758
Average of the above – excluding Durham CC			<b>2,643</b>

n.b. the national picture indicates that members in mainly – rural areas tend to represent more electors, on average, than in mainly- urban areas. For this reason, we also compared the Council will several mainly - rural local authorities, as is Durham. (See Appendix B).

Data Source: Office for National Statistics

**Appendix B - Durham members' average constituency representation workload based on electors per member compared with that of other mainly – rural large local authorities**

*Based on the present number of members, Durham's members on average represent the 2nd fewest number of electors. **After the 2025 elections, they will represent more on average than most of the other local authorities in the group.***

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>No. of Electors ('000s)</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>	<b>Constituency representation indicator (Electors per member)</b>
<b>Durham - present</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>3,088</b>
<b>Durham – From May 2025</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>3,971</b>
Authority 1	431	87	4,954
Authority 2	478	90	5,311
Authority 3	383	98	3,908
Authority 4	298	86	3,465
Authority 5	265	78	3,397
Authority 6	270	67	4,030
Authority 7	413	147	2,809
Authority 8	251	67	3,746
Authority 9	311	82	3,792
Authority 10	263	70	3,757
Authority 11	250	74	3,378
Authority 12	224	63	3,555
Average of the above – excluding Durham CC			3,841

Data Source: Office for National Statistics



**Appendix C – Comparisons of the Council’s basic allowance payment with those of other similar mainly rural authorities**

Name	Basic Allowance		Electora te	Basic Allowance per ‘000s of electorate	
	£	Ranking*		£	Ranking*
North Yorkshire	17,000	1	478,427	36	9
Cornwall	16,378	2	431,186	38	8
Buckinghamshire	13,532	7	412,797	33	11
Durham	13,300	8	390,322	34	10
Wiltshire	15,868	3	382,730	41	7
Cheshire East	12,851	10	310,618	41	7
Dorset	14,689	4	297,452	49	4
East Riding	13,765	6	270,008	51	3
North Northamptonshire	12,500	11	264,500	47	6
Cheshire West and Chester	14,453	5	262,603	55	2
Shropshire	12,000	12	250,146	48	5
Central Bedfordshire	13,203	9	223,722	59	1

Rankings: Highest = 1, Lowest = 12

Basic allowance - Durham CC is the 8th highest out of 12 LAs

Basic allowance per 1,000 electors – Durham CC is the 2nd lowest out of 12 LAs.

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**County Council**

**22 January 2025**

**Adoption of the County Durham  
Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan**



## **Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy, and Growth**

**Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment, and Assets**

### **Electoral divisions affected:**

Countywide.

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of the report is to seek County Council approval to recommend that County Council agree to the adoption of the County Durham Housing Strategy (CDHS) as detailed at Appendix 2. Cabinet has agreed to adopt the accompanying 12-Month Delivery Plan, as detailed at Appendix 3, subject to the HRSS being adopted by County Council.

### **Executive summary**

- 2 The current housing strategy was adopted in 2019. The wider economy has changed significantly since then, with the impact of Covid, the cost of living crisis, and rising levels of homelessness requiring a new strategy and vision for housing in County Durham. It is therefore important that we have an up to date strategy that can influence as well as respond to regional and national agendas.
- 3 The CDHS has been developed to consider housing issues across County Durham up to 2035. The strategy provides a strategic framework to inform the actions and investment of the council and its partners and has been developed to ensure the council is well positioned to maximise future opportunities for funding support. The CDHS 2024 will replace the current housing strategy adopted in 2019.

- 4 The strategy has been developed following two rounds of consultation with partners and stakeholders, including local residents, which was undertaken in parallel with the homelessness strategy. The first round of consultation focused on developing the high-level principles and priorities for the strategy, with a second round focusing on the draft strategy itself. This was undertaken between 30 October 2023 and 18 December 2023. The council engaged with residents and interested parties through:
  - (a) its partnership structure;
  - (b) online engagement events;
  - (c) tailored surveys; and
  - (d) a presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5 The consultation determined that there was overwhelming support for the proposed vision, principles, and priorities. Amongst other things, the importance of meeting housing needs, issues with concentrations of private rented sector housing stock, and the importance of energy efficient housing and partnership working came through the consultation. A number of changes were made to the draft housing strategy as a result of the consultation as set out in the Statement of Consultation, as detailed at Appendix 4.
- 6 The CDHS sets out the vision and strategic direction for housing activity in County Durham to provide:
  - (a) good quality housing that meets everyone's needs;
  - (b) good quality housing that is affordable for local people; and
  - (c) supports the creation of great places to live.
- 7 The strategy will also help support the ambitions of the council's Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES), which recognises that housing is a major enabler to achieving economic growth and better social outcomes for the council's communities. By contributing to a high quality of place and an attractive housing stock and supporting jobs, particularly in the construction sector, the strategy will be important in the delivery of the IES's objectives.
- 8 The strategy contains seven principles that establish the foundation and rationale underpinning decisions and five priorities for action.
- 9 A key response to the consultation was the need for a delivery plan to be included in this version of the housing strategy. It was always the intention to prepare a delivery plan following adoption of the strategy however, to address these comments, a 12-month delivery plan has

been prepared and attached to the housing strategy, as detailed at Appendix 3. A more long-term delivery plan will still be prepared following adoption, working with partners including the Housing Forum, and adopted by Cabinet.

- 10 A review of progress of delivery of the strategy will be carried out annually and reported to Cabinet. The council recognise that the housing strategy and delivery plan are being developed in the context of significant change at the national level with a new legislative framework and changes to national guidance. In particular a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024 introduces a number of changes which will impact on the planning functions of the council. The key change however seeks to deliver the Government's wider objectives primarily relating to significantly increasing housing delivery and achieving economic growth including by giving all councils in England new, mandatory housing targets. The new annual figure of 2011 houses per year for County Durham is a 54% increase on the current County Durham figure of 1308. This will have a major impact on the need for supporting infrastructure and the ability of the development industry to deliver. These significant changes will likely necessitate an early review of the County Durham Plan.
- 11 There is also emerging devolution work, including a strategic place partnership between North East Combined Authority (NECA) and Homes England. The annual review of the delivery plan will allow us to respond to these policy changes and any future funding opportunities, including emerging work relating to devolution, and differences in demand to the service. The delivery plan will be updated accordingly following the annual review.
- 12 At the meeting of County Council on 17 July 2024 and, following extensive discussion, the decision of County Council was to defer adoption of the CDHS. The main points of concern related to how the Housing CDHS dealt with:
  - (a) the proliferation of HMOs in the county and the potential use of Article 4 Directions; and
  - (b) the council house build programme and particularly the delivery timeframe and the composition of the proposed 500 units.
- 13 Two reports, one for each issue, were prepared and discussed at a meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (E&EOOSC) on 11 September 2024. As a result of the discussion at the meeting, a number of amendments to the CDHS were then proposed and agreed at a second meeting of E&EOOSC on 4 November 2024. This included a number of amendments to the National Context section as a result of the General Election and the proposed

changes to the legislative programme set out by the new Government. Similarly, as a result of the time difference, the 12-Month Delivery Plan has also been updated. The amendments to the CDHS are detailed at Appendix 6 and the amendments to the 12-Month Delivery Plan are shown at Appendix 7.

- 14 The CDHS has been subject to an equalities impact assessment, as detailed at Appendix 5. This confirms that the strategy presents no negative impact on the protected groups.

## **Recommendations**

- 15 County Council is recommended to:
  - (a) adopt the County Durham Housing Strategy (CDHS) as detailed at Appendix 2.

## Background

- 16 The current housing strategy was adopted in 2019. The wider economy has changed significantly since then, with the impact of Covid, the cost of living crisis and rising levels of homelessness requiring a new strategy and vision for housing in County Durham.
- 17 The CDHS has been developed to consider housing issues across County Durham. The housing strategy will be delivered in partnership through the Housing Forum and in discussion with the:
  - (a) county's residents;
  - (b) private sector; and
  - (c) other agencies.
- 18 It will also provide a strategic framework to inform the actions and investment of the council and its partners.
- 19 The housing strategy will ensure the council is well positioned to maximise future opportunities for funding support. In this context, the housing strategy provides the evidence to identify issues within a housing context and a clear approach to address these issues.
- 20 The housing strategy is a comprehensive document that aligns with other existing or emerging strategies including the:
  - (a) County Durham Vision;
  - (b) County Durham Plan (CDP); and
  - (c) the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (HRSS).
- 21 It also supports the council's IES and Climate Emergency Response Plan (CERP). The council also recognise that the housing strategy and delivery plan are being developed in the context of emerging devolution work, including a Strategic Place Partnership between NECA and Homes England.

## Consultation Overview

- 22 The principles and priorities paper was the first stage in the preparation of the housing strategy in June 2023 to August 2023. The responses to this consultation were used to inform a draft housing strategy that was subsequently consulted on from 30 October 2023 to 18 December 2023. Consultation ran alongside the consultation on the HRSS and was joined up where appropriate. The consultation included:
  - (a) presentations to 13 Area Action Partnerships;

- (b) attendance at a number of County Durham Partnership groups including the:
  - i. County Durham Together Partnership;
  - ii. Health and Wellbeing Board; and
  - iii. Place and the Health and Communities Board;
- (c) a presentation and discussion at Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (d) presentations to the County Durham Association of Local Councils;
- (e) online consultation events; and
- (f) the consultation was also supported by a social media and communications campaign that included a:
  - i. dedicated webpage;
  - ii. Facebook advert;
  - iii. a number of Facebook posts;
  - iv. a number of Instagram stories; and
  - v. a number of tweets on X.

23 Whilst a range of views came through the consultation and those detailed points have informed the revision of the draft housing strategy, the main messages from the consultation can be summarised as follows:

- (a) overwhelming support for the vision, principles, and priorities;
- (b) strong emphasis on the importance of partnership working with partners keen to be involved in the development of the strategy and the delivery plan;
- (c) new development should be focused on brownfield sites to stop building on greenfield sites or in the countryside;
- (d) ensure appropriate infrastructure is built alongside new housing to support new housing development;
- (e) support for strong focus on affordable housing, affordable housing should be recognised as a product of choice with affordable rental a tenure of choice;



- (f) better access to affordable housing including social housing and private rented, in particular for:
  - i. single people;
  - ii. younger people; and
  - iii. larger families;
- (g) support for the links between housing on health and wellbeing with more emphasis needed on impact of poor housing on health;
- (h) continue to improve partnership working with registered providers to enable further regeneration of communities and high quality placemaking;
- (i) more focus needed on provision of suitable affordable housing for students;
- (j) concerns about the impact of student housing in and around the city centre;
- (k) explore the need for additional licensing in Durham;
- (l) concerns about the cost of living and poverty and affordability of housing;
- (m) energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions should continue to be a focus in the delivery of the housing strategy;
- (n) need more emphasis regarding the impact of poor housing on health;
- (o) housing standards in the private, social and student rental sector was a concern, particularly regarding damp, mould, and condensation;
- (p) need for more meaningful engagement with members of the community and harder to reach groups in decision making; and
- (q) more clarity needed on how priorities will be achieved and timescales.

24 A presentation was given to Members of the E&EOSC on 18 December 2023. The comments received were fed into the housing strategy. A follow up session was held on 22 April 2024 where it was demonstrated how the Committee's comments had been addressed. There were a small number of subsequent comments and these have been included in the Statement of Consultation, as detailed at Appendix 4.

## Draft County Durham Housing Strategy

- 25 The CDHS sets out the strategic direction for housing activity in County Durham and a vision to provide good quality housing that meets everyone's needs, is affordable for local people and supports the creation of great places to live. The final vision is as follows:

*'By 2035 County Durham will be a place that has good quality homes that meet the needs of existing and future residents that they can afford. The provision and quality of housing will support economic growth, contribute to improved health, community safety and create and maintain sustainable, mixed, and balanced communities. People will live long and independent lives within connected and safer communities.'*

- 26 The CDHS contains seven principles. The principles establish the foundation and rationale underpinning decisions and actions to deliver the vision. The principles are as follows:

- (a) principle 1: everyone has a right to a warm, safe, and decent home;
- (b) principle 2: everyone should have access to a home that is affordable to them;
- (c) principle 3: housing is the cornerstone of communities and should support improved health, community safety, educational attainment, and the local economy;
- (d) principle 4: the strategy will be for the county, not the council, and will promote local solutions underpinned by community engagement;
- (e) principle 5: all new houses should be accessible, tenure blind and provide flexible living for different stages in a person's life, always aiming to allow people to be independent, including remaining in their home for as long as they desire;
- (f) principle 6: existing and new communities should be physically, digitally, culturally, and economically connected to support the creation of sustainable, safe, mixed, and balanced communities including bringing empty properties back into use; and
- (g) principle 7: the strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards the council's CERP.

- 27 The purpose of the CDHS is to set the context as to how the council and its partners will meet the housing challenges faced. The draft CDHS

includes the following priorities for action that are not in order of importance:

- (a) priority 1: increase the delivery of new housing, including secure, affordable housing to meet housing needs together with the infrastructure required;
- (b) priority 2: ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe, and secure housing that support health and wellbeing;
- (c) priority 3: ensure high quality, energy efficient houses and effective landlord services;
- (d) priority 4: ensure a comprehensive range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, disabled people and children and young people including specialist accommodation and support; and
- (e) priority 5: ensure high quality placemaking, creating safe, accessible, prosperous, and sustainable places to live.

28 The CDHS recognises the importance of placemaking and how housing needs to complement and integrate with the spaces around it so that people feel part of a community and can easily access the services and amenities they need. Providing the right infrastructure is of vital importance to good placemaking. The strategy recognises the importance of increasing the delivery of new houses including secure, affordable housing and new council owned housing.

29 The strategy sets out that everyone in County Durham should have fair and equal access to safe and secure housing that meets their needs. This includes addressing the specific needs of groups including:

- (a) children in care;
- (b) children leaving care;
- (c) people with disabilities;
- (d) people with complex health issues; and
- (e) older people.

30 The strategy seeks to support people to prevent them becoming homeless and enable them to secure and maintain and sustain living in good quality, permanent accommodation with support in place where it is needed. It also seeks ensure that a comprehensive range of supported and specialist housing is available for those who need it.

- 31 The strategy reflects a commitment to providing high quality housing and to work with local communities and put them at the heart of the decision-making process in a way that meets their needs and priorities. The strategy also seeks to drive up standards in the private rented sector.
- 32 The delivery of the CDHS will complement activities in other plans and strategies including:
- (a) County Durham Plan;
  - (b) The Council Plan;
  - (c) County Durham Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2020-25); and
  - (d) CERP 2 (2022-24).
- 33 The strategy will also help support the ambitions of the council's Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES), which recognises that housing is a major enabler to achieving economic growth and better social outcomes for the council's communities. New housing and the retrofitting of existing properties will support jobs, training, and skills, particularly in the construction industry. There are also opportunities for innovation, particularly relating to Modern Methods of Construction, and including local companies such as Corehaus in Murton. In conjunction with the County Durham Plan the strategy will also contribute to a high quality of place, promoting the county as a place to live and invest and providing the necessary supporting infrastructure. The strategy also seeks to ensure that new and existing housing is as sustainable as possible and is energy efficient.
- 34 The CDHS has been subject to an equalities impact assessment, as detailed at Appendix 5. This confirms that the strategy presents no negative impact on the protected groups.

## **Delivery Plan**

- 35 A key response to the consultation was the need for a delivery plan to be included in this version of the housing strategy. It was always the intention to prepare a delivery plan following adoption of the strategy; however, to address this response, a 12-month delivery plan has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 3. Some examples of the outcomes in the delivery plan include:
- (a) deliver the council house new build programme to deliver affordable homes to meet needs;
  - (b) develop a housing delivery pipeline to access funding opportunities;

- (c) review the current allocations and lettings policy to ensure it meet the needs of customers;
- (d) deliver the supported housing improvement programme to ensure providers are fit for purpose;
- (e) prepare a temporary accommodation placement strategy to provide suitable accommodation for those in need and reduce costs;
- (f) prepare guidance on keeping houses free from damp and mould;
- (g) deliver the disabled facilities grants to enable people to stay in their own houses;
- (h) develop and implement a programme of targeted delivery plans to support housing regeneration; and
- (i) explore ways to improve engagement with communities including students and tenants in relations to placemaking and how they access services.

36 A review of progress of delivery of the strategy will be carried out annually and reported to Cabinet. This will also address any policy or funding changes, including emerging work relating to devolution, and differences in demand to the service. The delivery plan will be updated accordingly following the annual review.

### **Amendments following County Council - 17 July 2024**

37 At the meeting of County Council on 17 July 2024 and, following extensive discussion, the decision of County Council was to defer adoption of the CDHS. The main points of concern related to how the CDHS dealt with:

- (a) the proliferation of HMOs in the county and the potential use of Article 4 Directions; and
- (b) the council house build programme and particularly the delivery timeframe and the composition of the proposed 500 units.

38 Two reports, one for each issue, were prepared and discussed at a meeting of the E&EOSC on 11 September 2024. As a result of the discussion at the meeting a number of amendments to the CDHS were then proposed and agreed at a second meeting of E&EOSC on 4 November 2024.

39 In response to the discussion on HMOs, additional text was added into the CDHS which provides context to the role of HMOs within the

housing market, the distribution of HMOs within the county and an overview of licencing and planning controls. The additional text notes that in preparation for the next iteration of the County Durham Plan the council will assess the effectiveness of the approach to HMOs as set out in the current Plan. Furthermore, the additional text sets out that the council will undertake a county wide public engagement exercise to both inform a future review and inform residents of what actions are available to local authorities to manage the numbers of HMOs in specific localities.

- 40 Amendments to the CDHS confirm that the 500 target for the council house delivery programme relates to 500 new build council houses. Additional text in this section confirms that if building council homes proves to be a viable proposition, it is likely that the programme will extend beyond 2029 and the number of new houses built will exceed 500.
- 41 Further amends to the CDHS included a number of amendments to the national context section, as a result of the General Election, and the proposed changes to the legislative programme set out by the new Government. Similarly, as a result of the time difference the 12-Month Delivery Plan has also been updated. The amendments to the CDHS are attached at Appendix 6 and the amendments to the 12-Month Delivery Plan are attached at Appendix 7.
- 42 The version of the CDHS, attached at Appendix 2, and the version of the 12-Month Delivery Plan attached at Appendix 3, incorporate these amendments.

### **Next Steps**

- 43 Following adoption of the CDHS, the council will work with partners to develop the longer-term delivery plan and deliver the actions in the 12-month delivery plan in order to achieve the strategy's principles and priorities. Although the end date of the housing strategy's vision is 2035 it will be reviewed as and when necessary.

### **Background papers**

- Housing Strategy Principles and Priorities Paper
- Housing Strategy Consultation Draft

### **Other useful documents**

- None

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The recommendations in paragraph 13 reflect that the adoption of the housing strategy is the responsibility of County Council as it is part of the council's budget and policy framework; however, the implementation of strategies, once adopted and including the housing strategy, sits with Cabinet.

Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 requires local housing authorities to consider housing conditions in their area and the needs of the area with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation.

### **Finance**

The housing strategy identifies a series of actions and outcomes. Each of these will be associated with a project that may require a funding bid once the scope of the project is determined. The housing strategy does not guarantee funding for the projects listed.

It should be noted specifically, however, that the council housing delivery programme will enable the council to build and acquire properties to manage as 'in house stock.' A housing revenue account must be established once the required threshold is met.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

The housing strategy principles and priorities paper was subject to public consultation for eight weeks between 26 June 2023 to 18 August 2023.

Consultation was also undertaken on the draft housing strategy between 30 October 2023 and 18 December 2023.

Consultation was undertaken with residents of County Durham and other stakeholders with a potential interest in the content of the document. Through the consultation the council made use of its partnership structure to assist in disseminating information about the housing strategy. Consultation ran alongside the consultation on the HRSS and was joined up where appropriate. The comments received at all stages have informed the final version of the housing strategy.

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

The Equality Act 2010, public sector equality duty S149-157 of the Act, has been considered as part of a full equalities impact assessment, which is



attached to this report at Appendix 5. The strategy presents no negative impact on the protected groups.

## **Climate Change**

Addressing the cause of climate change is a key thread through the draft housing strategy including principle seven and priority three that state that the strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing.

## **Human Rights**

Protocol 1 Article 1: Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions including their property; the housing strategy will provide a framework to deliver housing to meet housing needs.

Article 8: provides a right to respect for private and family life. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home, and his correspondence. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of:

- (a) national security;
- (b) public safety;
- (c) economic wellbeing of the country;
- (d) for the prevention of disorder or crime;
- (e) for the protection of health or morals; or
- (f) for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

The council will ensure the housing strategy will be consistent with the council's human rights obligations.

## **Crime and Disorder**

None.

## **Staffing**

Resource is required to progress the production, monitoring, review, and implementation of the housing strategy.

## **Accommodation**

None.

## **Risk**

Detailed risk assessments will be undertaken at the project level and as part of delivering against the housing strategy.

## **Procurement**

None.

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## **Appendix 2: County Durham Housing Strategy**

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Please refer to the attached County Durham Housing Strategy.

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## **Appendix 3: 12-Month Delivery Plan**

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Please refer to the attached 12-Month Delivery Plan.

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## **Appendix 4: Statement of Consultation**

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Please refer to the attached Statement of Consultation.

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## **Appendix 5: Equality Impact Assessment**

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Please refer to the attached Equality Impact Assessment.

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## **Appendix 6: Amendments to the Housing Strategy**

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Please refer to the attached Schedule of Amendments to the Housing Strategy.

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## **Appendix 7: Amendments to the Housing Strategy Delivery Plan**

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Please refer to the attached track changes version of the 12-Month Delivery Plan.



# Draft County Durham Housing Strategy 2024

## Foreword

We believe that housing is more than just bricks and mortar. It is at the heart of families, communities and our local economy. Whether renting or buying, there is clear evidence that having access to good quality, suitable, secure and well-maintained housing has a profound impact on health and wellbeing and, therefore, quality of life. A sufficient supply of housing, including affordable housing, is a key component of achieving inclusive economic growth, and the role it plays in supporting good health and wellbeing and supporting people into work is recognised by Public Health England<sup>1</sup>. **The Housing Strategy, together with our Inclusive Economic Strategy and the County Durham Plan demonstrate the council's ability to put in place a strategic framework which prioritises the needs of our residents and recognises the importance of the as central to all we do.**

For many years, the number of new affordable houses built in County Durham has fallen below the number needed, whilst the quality of much of our older stock needs significant investment to bring it up to modern standards. **Recent changes to national planning guidance will also require the council to deliver significantly more houses to meet the Government's stated target of delivering 1.5 million houses by the end of the current parliament.**

The Housing Strategy aims to support people, to live independently with support where required, and remain in their home for as long as they desire by ensuring houses are flexible to differing needs over their lifetime, including supporting family living and adaptability for older age.

To achieve this aim, we need to see a step change in the number of affordable houses being built in all parts of the county, including the rural west. We also need to do much more to drive up the quality and standard of properties, whether newly built houses coming through the planning system or existing houses in the private rented, market or affordable sectors, so that everyone has access to a warm, safe and decent property that they can afford. Bringing back into use empty properties, wherever possible, is a key aim of the strategy as this both helps deliver much needed housing and tackles what can otherwise be a blight on the community, including the impact of high hedges.

The Housing Strategy is a strategy for County Durham and reflects the diversity of communities across County Durham and differing issues and opportunities. We believe that all stakeholders – residents, developers, investors, builders, housing associations and the local authority – have a part to play in delivering it and support sustainable, mixed, and balanced and connected communities. We also believe that the best solutions are delivered locally, which is why we will encourage local solutions to local problems by engaging with local people, recognising that what is needed in one part of the county might be different to what is needed elsewhere.

Finally, the strategy will help deliver the ambitions of our Inclusive Economic Strategy, which recognises that housing is a major enabler to achieving economic growth and better social outcomes for our communities **by contributing to a high quality of place and an attractive housing stock and supporting jobs, particularly in the construction sector.** The strategy will also support energy

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<sup>1</sup> Public Health England was subsequently replaced by UK Health Security Agency and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards achieving the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan. We will also maximise the opportunities available to address fuel poverty through combining advice schemes and heating improvements and targeting interventions at those most in need, whilst new houses will be designed in line with current energy efficiency standards.

We are confident that with effective partnership working, determination, creativity and innovation, we can deliver this new approach to housing in a way that makes a real difference in our communities.



**Councillor James Rowlandson**

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets**

## Executive Summary

The County Durham Housing Strategy sets out the strategic direction for housing activity in County Durham and a vision to provide good quality housing that meets everyone's needs, is affordable for local people and supports the creation of great places to live. Its purpose is to set the context as to how we will meet the housing challenges we face, setting out the following priorities for action (these are not in order of importance):

- **Priority 1:** Increase the delivery of new housing, including secure, affordable housing to meet housing needs together with the infrastructure required.
- **Priority 2:** Ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe and secure housing that support health and wellbeing.
- **Priority 3:** Ensure high quality, energy efficient houses and effective landlord services.
- **Priority 4:** Ensure a comprehensive range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, disabled people and children and young people, including specialist accommodation and support.
- **Priority 5:** Ensure high quality placemaking, creating safe, accessible, prosperous and sustainable places to live.

The strategy recognises the importance of placemaking and how housing must complement and integrate with the spaces around it so that people feel part of a community and can easily access the services and amenities they need. Providing the right infrastructure is of vital importance to good placemaking. We must increase the delivery of new houses, including secure, affordable housing and new council owned housing.

Everyone in County Durham should have fair and equal access to safe and secure housing that meets their needs. This includes addressing the specific needs of groups including children in care, children leaving care, people with disabilities, those with complex health issues and older people.

We will help and support people to prevent them becoming homeless and enable them to secure and maintain, and sustain living in, good quality, permanent accommodation, with support in place where it is needed. We must also ensure that a comprehensive range of supported, and specialist housing is available for those who need it.

We are committed to providing high quality houses and will work with local communities and put them at the heart of the decision-making process in a way that meets their needs and priorities. We will also strive to drive up standards in the private rented sector.

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This Strategy identifies the key housing opportunities and challenges facing County Durham in the next five years. Our vision is:

**‘By 2035 County Durham will be a place that has good quality houses that meet the needs of existing and future residents that they can afford. The provision and quality of housing will support economic growth, contribute to improved health, community safety and create and maintain sustainable, mixed and balanced communities. People will live long and independent lives within connected and safer communities.’**

1.2. The Housing Strategy provides the strategic framework to deliver our housing priorities and supports the delivery of the Council Plan and the County Durham Vision. **It will also support the Government’s ambitions for increased housing delivery.**

- The Council Plan sets out the council’s vision and overall priorities and programme of work for the period 2019-2035.
- The County Durham Vision 2035, which was developed together with partner organisations and the public, sets out what we would want the county to look like in 15 years’ time. This vision is structured around three ambitions which are:
  - More and better jobs;
  - People live long and independent lives; and
  - Connected communities.

**The Housing Strategy is a strategy for the county not just the council, therefore, throughout the document any reference to ‘we’ or ‘our’ refers to Durham County Council, its partners and relevant agencies such as, registered providers, NHS, Durham Police, Durham Fire and safety services.**

## 2. National Context

- 2.1. The UK has some of the oldest housing stock in Europe and a history of failing to meet the number of new dwellings, and new affordable social housing, to meet demand. The combination of housing stock in need of regeneration and a lack of supply of new houses, including affordable houses, has resulted in a long-term increase in house prices, as well as increasing rents in the private rented sector. This means that owning a property is beyond the reach of many in the UK and private rented accommodation is becoming increasingly expensive for households as demand increases. When people are unable to access suitable housing it can result in overcrowding, more young people living with their parents for longer, impaired labour mobility, which makes it harder for businesses to recruit staff, and increased levels of homelessness.
- 2.2. Older housing stock can also bring with it issues around energy efficiency, adaptability, maintenance, repair and general suitability for housing demands and needs today, and in the future, as some housing stock reaches the end of its useable life.
- 2.3. The price of an average property in England in June 2023 was £286,000 an increase of 5% from November 2022. The 2021 Census record 61.3% of people owning their own homes in England, a decrease from 63.6% in 2011, it also shows an increase in those in private rented accommodation since 2011, at 20.5% and a decrease for those in social rented housing, at 17.1 %.
- 2.4. The National Housing Federation estimates that around 340,000 new houses need to be supplied in England each year, of which 145,000 should be affordable. The legacy of Covid and the present cost of living crisis have also had a real impact on people being able to afford a home and a stall on the delivery of new houses to meet demand and need.
- 2.5. The previous Conservative government set a national target for 300,000 new houses to be built each year to tackle the acute shortage of housing across the country. The new Labour Government have similarly set an ambitious target of 1.5 million more homes by the end of the parliament.
- 2.6. The previous government had recently passed new legislation and has published white papers and reports that will impact the housing market the new government have identified a number of pieces of legislation in their first King's Speech that will have an impact on housing. The Housing Strategy will therefore be delivered in the context of the following:
  - **Social Housing Act 2023** – passed by the previous Government, it will enact the reforms outlines in the Social Housing White Paper, which are aimed at improving the regulation of social housing, strengthening tenants' rights, and ensuring better quality and safer homes for residents. This will be done through stronger powers for the Regulator of Social Housing to carry out inspections, additional Housing Ombudsman powers to publish landlord best practice, 'Awaab's Law' which sets strict time limits for social landlords to address hazards such as damp and mould and new qualification requirements for registered providers.
  - **Revised National Planning Policy Framework December 2024** – Following consultation earlier in the year the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024. There are many changes which will impact on the planning functions of the council but the key changes seek to deliver the Government's

wider objectives primarily relating to significantly increasing housing delivery and achieving economic growth including by giving all councils in England new, mandatory housing targets. The new annual figure of 2011 houses per year for County Durham is a 54% increase on the current County Durham figure of 1308. This will have a major impact on the need for supporting infrastructure and the ability of the development industry to deliver. These significant changes will likely necessitate an early review of the County Durham Plan.

- **Renters Rights Bill/Renters Reform Bill** – the Renters Reform Bill was introduced to Parliament in May 2023 but halted from passing into law by the calling of the general election. It planned, amongst other things, to abolish Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions (following reforms to the court system) which would have empowered renters to challenge poor landlords without fear of losing their home. Following the General Election the King’s Speech announced that the new Labour Government would be bringing forward the Renters’ Rights Bill, which was subsequently published in September 2024. Although the Renters’ Rights Bill is very similar to the Renters (Reform) Bill, there are some significant differences, although the abolition of Section 21 remains.
  - Key additions include:
    - Ban on encouraging or inviting rental bidding, or accepting higher rent;
    - Requirement for advertising to state proposed rent;
    - Remedying hazards (Awaab’s Law); and
    - Additional offences for Rent Repayment Orders.
  - Key omissions include:
    - No minimum 6 month tenancy;
    - No new Mandatory Ground 8A for serious repeated rent arrears; and
    - No Lord Chancellor’s assessment before implementation of s21 abolition.
- **Levelling Up and Regeneration Act** – enacted in 2023 and sets out a policy regime to tackle geographical disparities across the UK based on the government setting medium term missions, with a 2030 timeframe, to boost productivity and living standards, spread opportunities and improve opportunities, restore a sense of community and local pride and belonging and empower local leaders and communities. Housing is a key component of the provisions of the Act which aims to deliver a more joined up way to tackle housing and regeneration issues.
- **Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-2028** - was developed jointly by Homes England and the previous Conservative Government. The strategy set out how Homes England will play its part in delivering the previous government’s levelling up and housing agendas. Its mission was to “drive regeneration and housing delivery to create high-quality houses and thriving places. This will support greater social justice, the levelling up of communities across England and the creation of places people are proud to call home”. The strategy has five interconnected objectives to deliver on the mission: create vibrant and successful places, build a housing and regeneration sector that works for

everyone, enable sustainable houses and places, promote creation of high-quality houses in well-designed places, facilitate the creation of homes people need.

- 2.7. We will monitor all of the announcements and legislation of the new Government and reflect them in the actions of the Delivery Plan as part of its regular updates.

### 3. Local context

- 3.1. All the following data and much more can be found on the Durham insights webpage<sup>2</sup> and are up to date at time of publication. County Durham is a largely rural county with almost half the population living in rural areas. In 2021 the County contained 249,520 dwellings, projected to rise to 258,374 by 2043.

#### Dwelling Stock

- 3.2. In County Durham 62.5% of properties are owner-occupied, 20% are social rented and 17.1% are private rented. Most dwellings in the county are terraced houses, which at 36% of the stock, is higher than for the Northeast region and for England. The mix of dwelling types in the county is changing with the proportion of bungalows in the county rising to 14%, higher than the region and England percentages. Detached dwellings have risen to 15%, again above the Northeast region of 12%. Of all dwellings, 5.9% have one bedroom/bedsit, 35.2% have two bedrooms, 44.9% have three bedrooms and 16.7% have four or more bedrooms.

#### County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy

- 3.3. The County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) sets a clear, long-term vision for the area's economy up to 2035, with an overarching aim to create more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy. It seeks to overcome barriers in order to transform levels of growth and harness the county's potential. It recognises that housing is a major enabler to achieving economic growth and better social outcomes for our communities.

- 3.4. The strategy will help support the ambitions of the IES, including the five Ps: People, Productivity, Places, Promotion and Planet. New housing and the retrofitting of existing properties will support jobs, training and skills, particularly in the construction industry. There are also opportunities for innovation, particularly relating to Modern Methods of Construction, and including local companies such as Corehaus in Murton. In conjunction with the County Durham Plan the strategy will also contribute to a high quality of place, promoting the county as a place to live and invest and providing the necessary supporting infrastructure. The strategy also seeks to ensure that new and existing housing is as sustainable as possible and is energy efficient.

#### Housing Market context

- 3.5. Median prices in County Durham have consistently been slightly lower than median prices for the North East, which are well below those for England as a whole. Overall, prices have increased from £100,000 in 2015 to £123,000 in 2022. Prices peaked at £128,000 in between April 2020 – March 2021 but have since fallen slightly.

#### Social Context

- 3.6. Indicators of deprivation have seen improvements in some areas, but not all have experienced the same benefits. The county is ranked 48<sup>th</sup> for deprivation out of 151 Upper Tier Local Authorities, with 1 being the most deprived authority. Child poverty in the county is 27.3%

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.durhaminsight.info/#/view-report/5f6e69673588409bae5d58e537a1c5bf/E06000047>

which is slightly lower than the Northeast as a region but still higher than England which is 22.5%. As a county it is also ranked 148<sup>th</sup> out of 151 Upper Tier Local Authorities for living environment. This rank considers the quality of the local environment including the quality of housing and outdoor environment.

- 3.7. The delivery of the Housing Strategy will complement activities in the following plans and strategies.
- The County Durham Plan is the Council's Local Plan. It sets out our growth ambitions between now and 2035 and the level of new houses, jobs and infrastructure needed to support this. The plan presents a vision for potential housing, jobs and the environment until 2035.
  - The County Durham Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2020-25) places our community at the heart of our wish to improve health and wellbeing, and to reduce health inequalities. It recognises the impact that housing quality can have on people's physical and mental health and sets out priorities to tackle the number of rough sleepers and the rise of households in temporary accommodation and reduce low quality housing.
  - The Climate Emergency Response Plan 2 (2022-24) sets out the long-term vision for County Durham, Durham County Council to reach net zero in its emissions by 2030, with the target for the County to become carbon neutral being brought forward to 2045 It sets out green energy aims including all new developments to have green energy generation schemes, and energy efficient, carbon passive technology to be used on new and existing buildings.

### Devolution

- 3.8. On 28 December 2022 the previous Government announced a devolution deal with the seven councils across the North East, including Durham. To implement the deal, a new Mayoral Combined Authority (NECA) has been established. The newly elected Mayor has significant powers including relating to housing. We therefore recognise that the Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan are being developed in the context of emerging devolution work, including a Strategic Place Partnership between NECA and Homes England. The Strategic Place Partnership (SPP) is a model developed by Homes England to enable greater collaboration and partnership working at a sub-regional scale, recognising those places such as the North East, with ambitious proposals for place-based growth and regeneration.
- 3.9. NECA also has a Brownfield Housing Fund which is seeking to support housing delivery by providing funding to unlock site delivery. The housing strategy will provide the context for any bids to the Brownfield Housing Fund.



## 4. Principles

4.1. The following principles establish the foundation and rationale underpinning our vision.

**Principle 1: Everyone has a right to a warm, safe and decent home.**

4.2. Properties should be well maintained, free of damp and mould. People should feel safe in their homes from domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour. A home should support positive health outcomes.

**Principle 2: Everyone should have access to a home that is affordable to them.**

4.3. We will support the delivery of a range and choice of homes to meet housing need and demand, including market housing for those who can afford it, affordable housing products for those who cannot afford to have their needs met through the market. Alongside the provision of new homes, we will work to bring regenerate our existing housing stock and bring empty homes back in to use, where appropriate, to meet housing needs. By ensuring a sufficient supply of all types of housing we can help prevent homelessness and reduce reliance on temporary accommodation. We will also seek to make sure there is sufficient homes for everyone.

**Principle 3: Housing is the cornerstone of communities and should support improved health, community safety, educational attainment, and the local economy.**

4.4. Health and wellbeing and life opportunities should be the same for all residents of County Durham. Housing plays a vital role in creating and sustaining strong communities, from providing a safe and secure place to live, to providing outdoor space to play and socialise. The blend of good quality houses, outdoor space, good infrastructure, with access to services, good schools and employment opportunities are key to thriving communities.

4.5. The Housing Strategy will align with a number of other strategies and plans to ensure that communities are safer, healthier and more prosperous. These include the Inclusive Economic Strategy, the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Growing Up in County Durham Strategy and the principles of the Anti-Social Behaviour pledge in supporting safe neighbourhoods.

**Principle 4: The strategy will be for the county, not the council, and will promote local solutions underpinned by community engagement.**

4.6. The Housing Strategy will be a strategy for County Durham that will be developed and delivered in partnership across the county and for the benefit of all of our residents. We will make use of the County Durham Partnership, its sub-groups including the Housing Forum, and other relevant groups in developing and delivering the Strategy.

4.7. The Housing Strategy will promote consultation and engagement with all members of the community as part of the delivery of its priorities. It will also jointly develop local solutions with partners, residents and relevant agencies.

**Principle 5: All new houses should be accessible, tenure blind and provide flexible living for different stages in a person's life, always aiming to allow people to be independent, including remaining in their home for as long as they desire.**

4.8. It is important that the houses that are delivered to meet needs are accessible and flexible. We will support people to live independently and remain in their home for as long as they desire by ensuring properties are flexible and can adapt to differing accommodation needs

over a person's lifetime, including supporting family living and adaptability for older age. The tenure of an affordable new build should not be distinguishable from market housing in the quality of its external finishings.

Principle 6: Existing and new communities should be physically, digitally, culturally and economically connected to support the creation of sustainable, safe, mixed and balanced communities, including bringing empty properties back into use.

4.9. The Housing Strategy recognises the diversity of communities across County Durham and the differing issues and opportunities they face. It has a role to coordinate activity of the council, its partners and wider investment opportunities to support sustainable, safe, mixed, and balanced and connected communities. We will pursue regeneration and renewal in our communities, including improving access to outdoor greenspace, bringing empty properties back into use, remodelling the existing stock or using demolition where appropriate.

Principle 7: The strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards the council's Climate Emergency Response Plan

4.10. In line with the council's Climate Emergency Response Plan, we will maximise the opportunities available to address fuel poverty through combining advice schemes and heating improvements and targeting interventions at those most in need to improve the energy efficiency of housing and reduce bills. We recognise the importance of the contribution of housing to energy efficiency targets and will actively explore new technologies as they emerge. As a minimum, new houses will be designed in line with current and future energy efficiency standards. In addition, we will continue to explore opportunities to deliver measures above and beyond standards including, utilising new and emerging technologies.

## 5. Priorities.

- 5.1. These priorities take forward the strategic direction of the Housing Strategy to deliver the vision. They set out the key areas where we will focus activity and how we will meet the housing challenges of the county.

### Priority 1: Increase the delivery of new housing, including secure, affordable housing to meet housing needs together with the infrastructure required.

- 5.2. An additional 24,852 new houses are needed in the county between 2016 and 2035 to meet housing need with a significant proportion of these already committed either on sites under construction or sites not started with planning permission.
- 5.3. We recognise the different housing needs of households and groups across the county. The Housing Strategy supports a range and choice of housing which is accessible and well designed to meet future needs and contribute to the sustainability of our communities.
- 5.4. Housing can shape and influence health and wellbeing of occupants, educational outcomes for children, economic opportunities as well as providing a feeling of security for occupants. Access to physical, social and green infrastructure, such as health services, employment, education, transport and outdoor greenspace, can play a positive role in creating and maintaining connected, mixed, balanced and sustainable communities and improving social mobility. Therefore, we will seek to ensure that new housing is delivered in locations in proximity to existing services and facilities, however recognising that in some rural areas there is not the existing infrastructure, but these communities would benefit from development for local people so that they can continue to live in rural areas and contribute to the sustainability of rural communities. New housing should also utilise brownfield land wherever possible.
- 5.5. Whilst meeting the housing needs of all groups is important, there are some specific needs which require intervention.
  - In order to meet existing and emerging housing need, 836 affordable houses are required every year for the County Durham Plan period. This is for people who lack their own housing or who live in unsuitable housing and cannot afford to meet their housing needs in the market, but historically delivery has fallen short of this. Registered providers will play a role in the delivery of affordable housing products;
  - The population of the county is ageing and over the next few decades, there will be a 'demographic shift' with the number (and proportion) of older people increasing. 2014 based population projections for County Durham indicate that from 2016 to 2035 the number of people aged over 65 will increase from 105,200 to 146,300 (a 39% increase) and those aged 75 and over will increase from 45,700 to 75,700 (a 65.6% increase). As most older people usually live in small households, usually as couples and single people, a minimum of 90% of household growth over the 19-year County Durham Plan period will be in households aged over 65; and

- There is an increase in the number of people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness in County Durham, with pregnant women particularly vulnerable to homelessness, which includes a rise in the complexity of cases that are being presented. The Homelessness Strategy sets out its vision to eradicate homelessness and ensure everyone has a safe place to live and supports the Housing Strategy.
- The student accommodation market is a uniquely functioning part of the private rented sector within County Durham<sup>3</sup> and therefore requires specific action to deliver on the priorities and principles set out in the Housing Strategy to ensure the needs of students are met and the impact on residents is minimised.
- Those who are pregnant or have babies and children will also have specific needs that will change as their families grow. Housing that will accommodate growing families and adapt to their changing needs will be required across all tenures.

#### What we will do

5.6. We are committed to supporting the ambitions as set out in the County Durham Plan, by ensuring enough new houses are provided that are energy efficient and meet the needs and affordability levels of local residents.

#### We will:

- Increase the supply of affordable houses, including new council housing;
- Ensure that affordable housing products are affordable for local people;
- Work with partners, including Durham University, to produce a safe, healthy, affordable, secure and good quality student housing stock; and
- Deliver infrastructure as set out in the County Durham Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and via s106 contributions.

#### We will do this by:

5.7. Continuing to shape and direct investment through the County Durham Plan to ensure housing needs are met. This includes:

- Allocating sites for housing – the current County Durham Plan allocates sites for the delivery of houses to meet the housing need of 1,308 dwellings per annum over the plan period up to 2035. Further allocations will be considered as part of the next County Durham Plan;
- Supporting the delivery of strategic housing sites within the County Durham Plan to ensure sufficient and suitable housing land is available to support economic growth and provide quality housing for the residents of the county;
- Working with partners to identify and manage a pipeline of development sites with an emphasis on brownfield land where available;
- Delivering affordable housing, including through the following: discount market sale, First Homes, shared ownership, rent-to-buy, affordable rent, social rent, help to buy,

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<sup>3</sup> There are up to 2,250 private rented properties within the DH1 postcode where students live, mostly in Houses in Multiple Occupation with 3 or more bedrooms.

starter homes, council house new build programme, and supporting registered providers with their development. The County Durham Plan also requires that on eligible sites, a portion of housing is delivered as affordable to meet affordable needs;

- Enabling housing in rural areas, including through the use of rural exception sites, to meet identified local needs for affordable or specialist housing;
- Delivering properties that meet the needs of older people – the County Durham Plan requires that houses are required of a standard, design and type to meet the needs of older people; and
- Delivering student accommodation – the County Durham Plan allocates sites for purpose-built student accommodation and supports the delivery of non-allocated purpose-built student accommodation where it can be demonstrated that there is an identified need, alongside other considerations. The County Durham Plan enables houses in multiple occupation to be permitted in line with a policy approach, recognising the concerns of some residents, and promoting, creating and preserving inclusive, mixed and balanced communities.
- Delivering and maintaining suitable sites and accommodation for gypsies and travellers - County Durham has a significant number of gypsies and travellers, most living in housing but a sizeable population live on six council sites and a number of authorised private sites across the County. The council also provides six temporary ‘stopover’ areas in the county which are made available for 28 days or less each year for seasonal use, also enabling gypsies and travellers to travel to popular events like Appleby Fair.

#### 5.8. Delivering affordable housing by:

- Delivering 500 new build council houses and associated infrastructure as part of the Council House Delivery Programme. The new build properties will be complemented by a programme of targeted acquisitions.
- The original intention was to deliver these 500 houses by 2026, however, the impact of covid 19 and wider economic conditions including inflationary pressures and rising interest rates have presented delivery challenges for the programme. As a result, we are rolling the programme forward commencing from the approval of the cabinet report in July 2023 with a six-year delivery plan to 2029. In reality, if building council houses proves a viable proposition, it is likely that the programme will extend beyond 2029 and the number of new houses built will exceed 500.
- Supporting registered providers to continue to play a significant role in the delivery of affordable housing products in County Durham through their investment plans.

5.9. Securing additional inward investment in the provision of new houses, including s106 delivery, to meet the target of the provision of an 836 of affordable homes per year between 2016-2035, by working closely with Homes England and registered providers (registered social landlords) to enable the provision of houses that meet needs.

5.10. Providing support for alternative delivery models including Community Led Housing. Community Led Housing is a valuable route of supply for affordable homes and other forms of specialist accommodation to meet localised needs.

- 5.11. Working with landlords to bring empty properties back into use, where appropriate, in order to meet local needs, by working with landlords, acquiring properties and delivering Targeted Delivery Plans (TDPs).
- 5.12. Commissioning a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment to identify housing demand and meet housing need including through a future review of the County Durham Plan.
- 5.13. Securing contributions for infrastructure, including through s106 agreements. The IDP has been developed in partnership with providers to identify infrastructure needs. It highlights some of the key development aspirations of the County Durham Plan including where future housing and jobs will be located and identifies those places where additional infrastructure or capacity is needed in the future.

Priority 2: Ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe and secure housing that support health and wellbeing.

- 5.14. Even though house prices in County Durham are below the national average, so are wages. New builds are still unaffordable for many on lower wages, particularly in areas that are considered high viability areas. Housing stock may not be available in some areas, for example in the city centre, and in parts of the county where there is stock available, it may be unsuitable for people's housing needs or not in a suitable location.
- 5.15. Whilst the NPPF definition of affordable housing is recognised, we are committed to delivering affordable housing products that are available in a variety of tenures and types and linked to local income. Houses should be affordable for local people with a choice of products and tenures that households can afford without falling into debt. Home ownership should be accessible to all. Those on lower wages should also be able to afford to rent their home or aspire to home ownership with a range of options available to assist them.
- 5.16. There has been an increase in homelessness in County Durham. This can be attributed to several factors including:
  - The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which placed a legal duty upon local authorities to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need;
  - The impact of policy approaches introduced in response to Covid 19, which have since been rescinded, and have led to an increase in the number of evictions;
  - The fact that homelessness cases presenting are becoming more complex with a range of acute housing needs; and
  - The cost-of-living crisis, which puts additional financial pressures on households and their ability to sustain a tenancy.
- 5.17. The 2017 Act introduced a requirement to both prevent and relieve homelessness through the provision of interim or short-term temporary accommodation where necessary. As a result, the council has faced increasing costs for the provision of temporary accommodation, with households living in temporary accommodation longer.
- 5.18. We are working hard to reduce the number of households being placed in temporary accommodation and to minimise the impact that homelessness has on individuals and families.

- 5.19. Housing quality has a significant and material impact on health and wellbeing. A decent home gives us a foundation for living a healthy life. Ensuring people have good and secure housing can help to delay or reduce a person's need for health and care services in the future and help them retain their independence, health and wellbeing for longer.

#### What we will do

- 5.20. We want to ensure that everyone has fair and equitable access to housing that is safe, secure, affordable and meets their needs.

#### We will:

- Help and support people onto the housing ladder and own their own property through a variety of products;
- Help and support people in gaining secure rented accommodation they can afford;
- Help and support people to prevent themselves becoming homeless; and
- Enable people to secure and maintain good quality, permanent accommodation.

#### We will do this by:

- 5.21. Working together to maximise the delivery of affordable housing through the housing enabling function including accessing Homes England grant.
- 5.22. Focusing on homelessness prevention by developing a new Homelessness Strategy aligned to the Homelessness Reduction Act, setting out how we and our partners will help people address their housing needs to avoid homelessness.
- 5.23. Preparing a Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document, including a First Homes cap, which will enable people to get on the housing market ladder. Continue to deliver affordable housing products including Social Rent, Affordable Rent, First Homes, Discount Market Sale, Shared Ownership, Rent-To-Buy.
- 5.24. Preparing and implement a Temporary Accommodation Strategy.
- 5.25. Reviewing the choice based letting system, Durham Key Options (DKO) and work collaboratively with partners to deliver houses through DKO, to ensure that those who need housing, including those who have complex needs, have fair and equal access to it.

#### Priority 3: Ensure high quality, energy efficient houses and effective landlord services.

- 5.26. County Durham has seen a significant rise in the size of the privately rented sector (PRS) stock, with growth of nearly 78% to over 28,000 dwellings (12.6% of all occupied dwellings) between 2001 and 2011. The census of 2021 and modelled data suggest that this has increased again. Much of the private rented housing stock is older terraced housing and is often in poor condition.
- 5.27. Housing is an important determinant of health. Condensation and damp in houses can lead to mould growth, and inhaling mould spores can cause allergic type reactions, the development or worsening of asthma, respiratory infections, coughs, wheezing and shortness of breath. Living in a cold house can worsen asthma and other respiratory illnesses and increase the risk of other diseases and worsen other health conditions. Cold or damp conditions can have a significant impact on mental health, with depression and anxiety more common among people living in these conditions.

- 5.28. Housing is particularly important in ensuring a healthy start in life and is a key factor causing health inequalities. Some groups are more vulnerable to these housing conditions, such as children and young people, the elderly or people with pre-existing illness, are at a greater risk of ill health associated with cold or damp houses.
- 5.29. Some groups of people are more likely to live in poor quality cold and damp housing conditions, including households with an older person living in them, households with a lone parent, households with children, low-income households and households with people from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 5.30. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) takes into account housing safety hazards in order to assist the council in identifying and protecting against potential risks from deficiencies identified in dwellings. This research has shown that 12% of PRS properties have at least one category 1 hazard as determined by HHSRS as opposed to 10% in owner occupied homes and 5% in the social rented sector.
- 5.31. As the largest social landlords in the county, registered providers will continue to improve their stock including as part of their decarbonisation programmes. In addition, the recent Social Housing Act (2023) includes stronger powers for the regulator of Social Housing, social housing reform such as 'Awaab's Law', changes to the Decent Homes Standards, more rights for tenants and new qualifications and training standards for registered providers.
- 5.32. County Durham has many areas and communities that are experiencing a mix of housing and wider residential environment issues. This includes issues such as:
- improving standards in the private rented sector;
  - long-term empty properties;
  - the provision of sufficient affordable housing;
  - meeting the housing needs of older people; and
  - addressing fuel poverty.
- 5.33. We are committed to working with local communities and landlords to ensure that regeneration is shaped and delivered in a way that meets their needs.
- 5.34. The council approved a selective licensing scheme for County Durham in September 2020 and was introduced in April 2022. The scheme runs until 2027 and aims to improve management standards increasing compliance rates, provide safe and healthy homes by reducing housing hazards and disrepair and reduce anti-social behaviour by 10% from baseline figures. Enforcement action will also be carried out where appropriate to do so.
- 5.35. Well managed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) form an important part of the private rented sector, often providing cheaper accommodation for people whose housing options are limited. Whilst larger HMOs require planning approval, smaller ones (those with fewer than six occupants) are classed as permitted development and therefore, do not require the Council's approval. Evidence from Council tax records and HMO Licences show that most HMOs in the County are located in Durham City and are primarily occupied by students however, HMOs are beginning to appear elsewhere in the County. . Most HMOs are well managed however, some can cause issues for neighbouring residents and local communities. In those cases, the council can use its licensing and other powers to ensure landlords are



meeting their obligations relating to the management of the property and the wellbeing of their tenants. The County Durham Plan also includes a policy to manage the proliferation of HMOs to maintain mixed and balanced communities. This is complemented by a number of Article 4 Directions which require landlords proposing smaller HMOs to apply for planning permission.

#### What we will do

5.36. We are committed to ensuring that all houses are of high quality and that landlords that do not meet this quality are held to account.

We will:

- Ensure continuing and improved housing standards and conditions; and
- Deliver our new stock to the highest standards, with a focus on sustainability and energy efficiency.

#### We will do this by:

- 5.37. Continuously reviewing housing conditions in the private sector, identifying any action, including further licensing, that needs to be taken to improve conditions.
- 5.38. Continuing to build and maintain positive relationships with private rented sector providers and make the new Private Landlords Accreditation Scheme, The Durham Rental Standard, an effective mechanism for engaging with the sector and a catalyst for change.
- 5.39. Improving the quality of the housing stock with the aim of ensuring that housing is free from damp and mould.
- 5.40. Working with partners to ensure robust processes are in place including a reporting mechanism for frontline staff.
- 5.41. Working with partners to ensure that residents are informed of hazards, and how to prevent them e.g. damp and mould which are a specific risk to their health and inform residents about how they can be supported to have identified hazards rectified.
- 5.42. Implementing the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) to improve the standards of accommodation and support provided by non-commissioned supported housing providers.
- 5.43. Continuing to effectively implement our Selective Licensing Scheme and explore extending licencing arrangements to improve standards where appropriate.
- 5.44. Inspecting properties as part of ongoing projects such as the Supported Housing Improvement Programme, Asylum Widening Dispersal Scheme, Afghan Resettlement Scheme and Homes for Ukraine, to ensure these properties offer safe accommodation.
- 5.45. Working to identify new HMOs that require a licence and take robust action against landlords who fail to comply with legislative requirements and HMO management regulations.
- 5.46. In preparation for the next iteration of the County Durham Plan we will assess the effectiveness of the approach to HMOs set out in the current Plan, and will undertake a county wide public engagement exercise to inform a future review and inform residents of what actions are available to local authorities to manage the numbers of HMOs in specific localities. We will therefore also explore the availability of evidence relating to the location of

HMOs and the potential need for further Article 4 Directions relating to smaller HMOs outside of Durham City.

- 5.47. Continuing partnership working through our formal partnership arrangements, including the Housing Forum, and as part of the council's wider housing enabling role.
- 5.48. Regenerating our estates and communities by working with residents to develop and deliver solutions that meet local needs and priorities, generate new investment, create safe, mixed, balanced, and sustainable communities, and provide houses that are affordable.

Priority 4: Ensure a comprehensive range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, disabled people and children and young people, including specialist accommodation and support.

- 5.49. As our population of older people continues to grow, sometimes with complex health conditions, the demand for appropriate housing and support is increasing. Meeting the needs of older people is a key issue which will be addressed, including through new provision, accessible and adaptable houses, specialist accommodation and bungalows in the right locations with the infrastructure and amenities to support them.
- 5.50. People with additional needs require safe, secure and affordable homes with the support required to remain independent and have a good quality of life. The join up between housing and social care is really important to assist many residents live independently and to plan for future housing stock provision. For many people the care and support required can be delivered in general needs housing, but independent living and supported housing models are required where people need additional safety and security and/or a substantial level of support. This includes through a Housing First Approach which prioritises getting people quickly into stable homes. Others that may need support are, pregnant women and women with babies, victims of crime, including non-domestic crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse and people involved in the Criminal Justice System and prison releases.

What we will do

- 5.51. We want to ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to the supported and specialist housing that meets their specific needs.

We will:

- Support a range of housing options that enable people to live safely and independently for as long as possible;
- Develop a Housing First programme that focuses on first giving someone immediate access to a settled and secure home, with access to appropriate support, where requested by the client, including services to cater for those who may be alcohol or drug dependant; and
- Continue joint working between housing, health, social care services and external providers and partners.

We will do this by:

- 5.52. Promoting and sustain independent living, by planning for the provision of specialist and supported housing and housing related support for a variety of client groups, such as people with physical and mental health needs and those with learning disabilities in line with Adults and Childrens Services commissioning strategies.

- 5.53. Providing temporary accommodation which gives tenancy support to tenants who are excluded from the Housing Register for various reasons or present with complex needs.
- 5.54. Ensuring the provision of adaptations together with flexible, personalised care and support to enable people to live independently for as long as possible as their care needs develop with age.
- 5.55. Undertaking a Needs Led Accommodation Review (NLAR) to consider longer term specialist accommodation needs – the NLAR is considering the longer term needs of specific groups including pregnant women, children and young people, older people, people with mental health or learning difficulties and homelessness. The join up between housing and social care is important to assist many residents live independently and to plan for future housing stock provision.
- 5.56. Assessing the need for single occupancy properties with social space and community facilities, particularly for vulnerable men and women.
- 5.57. Implementing the polices of the County Durham Plan including:
- Ensure that new housing meets the Nationally Described Space Standards;
  - build 66% of new housing to M4(2) accessible and adaptable standards on developments of 5 units or more;
  - Require 100% of specialist housing for older people will meet M4(2) accessible and adaptable standards, and a minimum of 25% of accommodation to meet M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings); and
  - Require new development to provide an attractive range of housing options for older people with a minimum of 10% of dwellings to be of a design and type that will increase the housing options of older people, such as bungalows.
- 5.58. Continuing engagement and joint working with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and other Criminal Justice Agencies, including the Local Criminal Justice Board, to prioritise and maintain housing pathways in the Justice System.
- 5.59. As part of the review of DKO we will ensure the housing needs of our care leavers are prioritised, securing accommodation that mirrors the options available for young people who have not been in care.
- 5.60. Including the importance of social support from family and friends and the need for people to have a choice of where to live so that they can sustain their social and family support networks.

#### Priority 5: Ensure high quality placemaking, creating safe, accessible, prosperous and sustainable places to live.

- 5.61. The quality of the environment in which houses are built is as important to our health, wellbeing and prosperity as the buildings themselves. We are committed to ensuring that in future it will be of a high standard in terms of architecture, urban design, sustainability, and innovation. This ensures that new development enhances and complements existing high-quality areas and raises the design standards and quality of areas in need of regeneration and contributes to the social value of an area.

- 5.62. Where a need for regeneration has been identified, we will use a variety of housing regeneration activities such as acquisition and demolition, group repair schemes, environmental improvements or the facilitation of new development depending on the needs of the area and community. Where appropriate we will also collaborate at a strategic level with our partners, such as Registered Providers, including joint ventures and other suitable mechanisms.
- 5.63. New development should provide local people with civic pride, make them feel safe and secure and help improve the overall image of the county and reflect local distinctiveness. Development needs to be carefully planned to ensure important features and characteristics are protected and enhanced, where the needs of the community are reflected.
- 5.64. Creating accessible and permeable public realm through connecting places and spaces, will help to ensure that many daily needs can be met using walking, cycling or public transport. A high-quality built environment should consider the amenity of both existing and future residents and consideration should be given to matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, as well as local climatic conditions. Indoor and outdoor space, including private and communal gardens, should be provided as appropriate to support a reduction in health inequality and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Spaces should be designed to be accessible to all users, including people with sensory and cognitive issues as well as reduced physical mobility. They must also seek to minimise opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour and make people feel that they can use them safely.
- 5.65. High-quality digital infrastructure is now essential for inclusivity, enabling residents to access training and employment. Recent trends toward home and hybrid working also require stable and fast connections. There is currently a lack of fast and reliable broadband in parts of the county, particularly in rural areas, which can cause digital exclusion. While we recognise that living in good quality housing which is free from hazards will improve the health and wellbeing of residents, addressing only the physical aspects of housing in County Durham will not in itself entirely improve the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of our communities, or reduce inequalities. Poverty in the form of material deprivation (inability to afford basic resources and services such as sufficient food and heating) is a persistent issue within certain localities and communities. If we wish to address this, then the location of our housing must take into account easy access to health and social care, education, employment, transport and healthy food. It must also support the viability and vitality of our communities including those in rural areas.

#### What we will do

- 5.66. We want to ensure our communities are places where people want to live.

##### We will:

- Aim to ensure that all housing, in particular affordable housing, is developed alongside the provision of sustainable infrastructure and community-based services; and
- Ensure that the wider environment of communities is of a high quality, including raising the quality of the wider environment in communities in need of regeneration.

##### We will do this by:

- 5.67. Continue to develop and implement a programme of Targeted Delivery Plans (TDPs) to improve the quality of the existing housing stock and the wider residential environment to

focus regeneration activities for communities most in need and support the creation and maintenance of mixed and balanced communities.

- 5.68. Ensure that new housing is accompanied by the delivery of the infrastructure, both physical and digital, that is needed to support it.
- 5.69. Create sustainable communities by locating new development in areas which offer the best opportunity for sustainable development patterns or support the vitality and viability of our towns and villages.
- 5.70. Create digitally enabled towns and villages to increase technology uptake, encourage innovation, and improve access to digital services.
- 5.71. Create safer living environments through careful neighbourhood design, proactively tackling anti-social behaviour in our communities.
- 5.72. Create healthier places to live which are fully accessible to people with disabilities, by supporting the design and layout of open and amenity spaces that are flexible and explore opportunities for community food growing space where appropriate to support the creation of healthy communities and improve wellbeing.
- 5.73. Promote well designed places and buildings that reflect local distinctiveness, promote sustainability and support the transition to a low carbon future.
- 5.74. Support the housing related element of the development and delivery of a new employment support offer which provides key worker support to vulnerable groups, those excluded from the labour market and those in insecure and low paid employment.

## 6. Delivery and Monitoring

- 6.1. The Housing Strategy sets out an ambitious set of priorities which can be achieved through the collective commitment of the council and its key partners and stakeholders. It is also recognised that there is a whole range of activities currently being undertaken across the county. Many of these are included in the attached 12-Month Delivery Plan at Appendix 1 which has been prepared in conjunction with internal and external partners. It also identifies further activity and actions that will ensure delivery of the Housing Strategy. A further, more long-term Delivery Plan will be prepared following adoption.
- 6.2. Through delivering the Strategy, we will respond to the specific needs of localities and address local issues. This has been recognised in developing the Delivery Plan, and which reflects the geography of the area.
- 6.3. It is important that progress against this Strategy and Delivery Plan is monitored robustly and transparently, we will therefore:
  - Monitor progress annually against a monitoring framework so that we are responsive to emerging needs, policy, and legislative changes; and
  - Report progress, including to Overview and Scrutiny, against the strategic priorities and actions in the Delivery Plan annually and publish details of our progress on the council's website.
- 6.4. The delivery of the Housing Strategy will be supported by a number of other policies and strategies including: The Towns and Villages Investment Plan; Climate Emergency Response

Plan (CERP) 2; Inclusive Economic Strategy; Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy; County Durham Plan; Homelessness Strategy; Poverty Action Plan; Growing up in County Durham Strategy; Tenancy Strategy; Affordable Warmth Strategy; and Allocations Policy.

- 6.5. Although the end date of the Housing Strategy's Vision is 2035 it will be reviewed as and when necessary.

County Durham Housing Strategy

# Delivery Plan 2025 – 2026

<b>PRIORITY 1: INCREASE THE DELIVERY OF NEW HOUSES, INCLUDING SECURE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO MEET HOUSING NEEDS TOGETHER WITH THE INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED</b>					
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Links to other Priorities</b>
Enough affordable houses are delivered to meet housing need across the county in both rural and urban areas	1.1.1	Develop a delivery trajectory to enable more effective annual monitoring	February 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	1.1.2	Council House Delivery Programme - Obtain planning permission for Greenwood Avenue and Portland Avenue sites and start on site	February 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	1.1.3	Council House Delivery Programme – Develop rolling pipeline of sites to ensure ongoing development plan	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	1.1.4	Commence development of Greenwood Avenue and Portland Avenue	March 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	1.1.5	Deliver homes to meet housing needs in rural areas, through the Council House New Build Programme and in partnership with the Rural Working Group	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
Speed up the determination of planning applications	1.2.1	Identify additional resources, including staff, to support the development management function	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Planning Manager (DCC)	



Enough houses are delivered to meet housing need across the county in both rural and urban areas	1.3.1	Deliver market and affordable housing and housing infrastructure in line with County Durham Plan (CDP) policy	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2, P5</b>
	1.3.2	Determine a timeline for delivery of council owned housing allocations	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Asset Strategy & Property Manager (DCC)	
	1.3.3	Develop a timetable and commence work on revising the County Durham Plan	March 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2, P3, P4, P5</b>
Sufficient, suitable housing land is available to support economic growth and provide quality housing for the residents of the county	1.4.1	Identify and manage a brownfield sites programme. Including bids into NECA Brownfield Housing Fund	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers - Homes England	<b>P2, P5</b>
A housing delivery pipeline exists to more effectively access funding opportunities	1.5.1	Develop a single housing delivery pipeline to include council and Registered Provider delivery priorities.	March 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P2, P5</b>
	1.5.2	Integrate the pipeline of estate regeneration identified by the North East Housing Partnership and the council's delivery pipeline	JMarch 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P5</b>

	1.5.3	Deliver the Registered Providers affordable homes pipeline to meet needs including Seaham Garden Village and Roseberry Comprehensive School	December 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P2, P3, P5</b>
	1.5.4	Regenerate Western Estate to deliver high quality and affordable homes	December 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	
Enough suitable accommodation is available to meet the needs of students	1.6.1	Work with Durham University and developers to bring forward the allocations in the County Durham Plan identified for Purpose Built Student Accommodation	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Durham University	<b>P2, P3</b>
Communities are able to deliver their own housing	1.7.1	Deliver community led housing schemes in line with the Towns and Villages Programme Investment Plan	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	
Empty properties are being brought back into use to support regeneration and meet needs	1.8.1	Investigate the local/regional approach to empty properties action and enforcement powers (EDMOs)	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - NECA	<b>P3</b>
	1.8.2	Develop an Empty Properties Strategy	March 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
Online mapping is being used to assist with housing delivery and regeneration	1.9.1	Develop an online mapping tool to assist with housing delivery and regeneration	March 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	

**PRIORITY 2: ENSURE THAT EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE, SAFE AND SECURE HOUSING THAT SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Links to other Priorities</b>
Review the current allocations and lettings policy to ensure they meet the needs of customers	2.1.1	Review the existing partnership agreement	July 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	
	2.1.2	Review Durham Key Options	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P4</b>
Deliver the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) to ensure providers are fit for purpose	2.2.1	Work with all non-commissioned supported housing providers to ensure they are meeting minimum property and support standards	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P4</b>
	2.2.2	Develop a Quality Assessment Framework for non-commissioned supported housing providers	February 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	

Prepare a temporary accommodation framework and delivery plan to provide suitable accommodation for those in need and reduce costs	2.3.1	Prepare temporary accommodation framework and delivery plan to highlight how Durham place TA clients within its own stock	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P4</b>
Prepare a temporary accommodation placement policy to assist homeless households in finding accommodation	2.4.1	Prepare a temporary accommodation placement policy	July 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P4</b>
Deliver home improvements to those with health conditions that are exacerbated by the cold	2.5.1	Promote the Warm and Healthy Homes campaign which offers free boiler repair and service to individuals with health conditions that are exacerbated by the cold	December 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC) - Public Health	<b>P3</b>
Deliver the relevant actions of the Poverty Action Steering Group to help reduce poverty	2.6.1	Identify the affordability gaps and barriers in accessing housing in the social and private rented sector and work across services to implement solutions where possible	July 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P3</b>
	2.6.2	Respond to the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy review, working with Revenues and Benefits	July 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	

	2.6.3	Initiate a housing and employment pilot to assist those cohorts struggling to access affordable housing whilst entering employment	July 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P5</b>
Work with Durham University to encourage students to access council services	2.8.1	Provide information, advice and guidance stands at freshers' weeks	October 2025	Safer Places Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P3, P5</b>
	2.8.2	Signpost council services available to students through the council's and Durham University's websites	October 2025	Safer Places Manager (DCC) – Durham University	<b>P1, P3, P5</b>
	2.8.3	Promote council services through communications systems in family hubs/GPs regarding housing information	October 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manger (DCC) – Public Health	<b>P4</b>

PRIORITY 3: ENSURE HIGH QUALITY, ENERGY EFFICIENT HOUSES AND EFFECTIVE LANDLORD SERVICES					
Outcomes	No.	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Links to other Priorities
Explore the need for additional licensing in Durham City	3.1.1	Consult with Durham University, Durham Student Union, Durham City Parish Council to gain an understanding of issues	July 2025	Business Compliance Manager (DCC)	
	3.1.2	Consider commissioning external consultants as per last assessment of additional licensing need (BRE used in 2012)	July 2025	Business Compliance Manager (DCC)	
Prevent fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions in domestic households to ensure warm and safe houses	3.2.1	Complete the Home Upgrade Grant scheme to retrofit private properties that are off the gas grid	March 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	3.2.2	Assist residents regarding eligibility checks for central heating grants through ECO4 including; Verifying household eligibility for ECO Flex route including low income and medical criteria on behalf of OFGEM	March 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	3.2.3	Co-ordinated programme of Energy efficiency advice across the Combined Authority and specifically in County Durham	December 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	

Prepare guidance on keeping houses free from damp and mould to ensure warm and safe houses	3.3.1	Issue new guidance for landlords and tenants in line with the new expectations from government on damp and mould action and in line with the new ombudsman code of guidance	December 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
Ensure compliance with the Safety and Quality Standard (Consumer standards 1 April 2024) to ensure houses are warm, safe and fit for residents	3.4.1	Registered Providers to ensure an accurate, up to date evidenced understanding of their stock quality that reliably informs their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	
	3.4.2	Registered Providers to ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard unless exempted by the regulator	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	
	3.4.3	When acting as landlords, Registered Providers to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	
	3.4.4	Registered Providers to provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	

	3.4.5	Registered Providers to assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P4</b>
Implement property inspections to ensure houses are warm, safe and fit for residents	3.5.1	Undertake a programme of formal inspections of empty properties that will target the worst properties contributing to community blight	March 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
	3.5.2	Implement an inspection regime that targets occupied properties with lower EPCs	March 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
	3.5.3	Continue reactive and proactive inspections of privately rented properties in both Selective Licensing and non-Selective Licensing areas	December 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
	3.5.4	Carry out inspections of all properties belonging to landlords signed up to the voluntary accreditation scheme – The Durham Rental Standard	December 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
Respond to the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 consultation to ensure the views of County Durham are considered	3.6.1	Prepare a response to the Government Consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023	TBC	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>

**PRIORITY 4: ENSURE A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS FOR OLDER AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE, DISABLED PEOPLE AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, INCLUDING SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT**



Outcomes	No.	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Links to other Priorities
Assess the housing needs of specialist groups including older people, children and young people, homeless and people with Learning Disability and Mental Health to ensure their needs are being met	4.1.1	Undertake a Needs Led Accommodation Review	July 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Public Health	<b>P3</b>
Deliver the Disabled Facilities Grants to enable people to stay in their own houses	4.2.1	Prepare a report on future disabled facility grant delivery	April 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	4.2.2	Create an improved assessment tool for disabled facility grants	April 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
Acquire properties to meet housing needs, including those requiring temporary accommodation	4.3.1	Acquire the remaining properties to deliver temporary accommodation (from the 40 originally approved)	March 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	4.3.2	Deliver the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) including central and dispersed properties	October 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P2</b>

	4.3.3	Develop bids for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 additional TA properties</li> <li>• 20 properties for larger families</li> </ul>	February 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P2</b>
	4.3.4	Work with Registered Providers to develop a strategic approach to the acquisition of accommodation for specialist groups for example older persons accommodation, care leavers, accommodation for victims of domestic abuse, ex-offenders and homeless	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P3</b>
	4.3.5	Deliver Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 (8 properties in Year 1)	March 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P2</b>
	4.3.6	Deliver Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 (4 properties in Year 2)	March 2026	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P2</b>
Ensure adequate accommodation arrangements are in place, including sufficient temporary accommodation, to avoid refugees with a positive asylum decision from becoming homeless	4.4.1	Undertake a review of the future demand on temporary accommodation and operational measures available to prevent homelessness within the cohort	March 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Housing Access & Independent Living Manager	<b>P2</b>

**PRIORITY 5: ENSURE HIGH QUALITY PLACEMAKING, CREATING SAFE, ACCESSIBLE, PROSPEROUS AND SUSTAINABLE PLACES TO LIVE**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Links to other Priorities</b>
Develop and implement a programme of Targeted delivery plans (TDPs) to support housing regeneration	5.1.1	Explore opportunities for further resources for regeneration projects such as TDPs.	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
Adopt the Design Code SPD to improve the quality of new housing	5.2.1	Prepare Settlement Character Studies for settlements across the County in support of the Design Code SPD with 50 completed	December 2025	Planning Manager (DCC)	
Deliver Horden Masterplan to regenerate the numbered streets in Horden	5.3.1	Acquire properties on Third Street and Fifth Street in line with the Horden Masterplan, with the aim of 100% properties acquired through negotiation	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P2, P3, P5</b>
	5.3.2	Provide support to owners and occupiers of Third Street and Fifth Street to enable the delivery of the Horden Masterplan	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	5.3.3	Secure a development partner to help deliver future phases of the Horden Masterplan	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	

	5.3.4	Obtain planning permission for Third, Fourth and Fifth Street for new housing development	June 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	
Review the Memorandum of Understanding between Durham County Council and Durham University to increase the emphasis on housing issues	5.4.1	Undertake a review of the MoU and explore whether more emphasis on housing and accommodation is required	March 2025	Managing Director Business Durham (DCC)	<b>P1, P2, P3</b>
Explore ways to improve engagement with communities, including students and tenants in relation to placemaking and how they access services	5.5.1	Explore ways to improve engagement with communities, including students and tenants in relations to placemaking and how they access services	October 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Consultation and Engagement Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
Explore opportunities for housing regeneration to support Town Centres to improve their vitality and viability	5.6.1	Explore opportunities for health on the high street/one public estate interventions	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Economic Development Manager (DCC) - Public Health	<b>P2</b>
	5.6.2	Explore opportunities for new housing in town centres through the Towns and Villages Programme	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Economic Development Manager (DCC)	

Enable collaboration between social housing providers to support local place making	5.7.1	Establish a new place-making group which will join-up delivery	July 2025	Chief Executives of Registered providers	<b>P2, P3</b>
Reduce digital exclusion of those living in social housing and in rural communities	5.8.1	Develop a digital and data collaboration model with social housing providers – connect suppliers, share understanding of needs, improve delivery, and deliver social tariffs, social value	December 2025	Strategic Manager (Digital Engagement) (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P1, P2</b>

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# County Durham Housing Strategy Consultation Statement

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Consultation Statement has been prepared in accordance with Regulations 12 and 13 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the council's Statement of Community Involvement.

## 2.0 What was consulted upon?

2.1 The Housing Strategy was subject to a seven-week period of consultation between 30 October and 18 December 2023.

## 3.0 Why is the Housing Strategy needed?

3.1 Housing is more than just bricks and mortar. It is at the centre of families, communities and our local economy. Whether renting or buying, there is clear evidence that having access to good quality, suitable, secure and well-maintained housing has a profound impact on health and wellbeing and, therefore, quality of life. A sufficient supply of housing, including affordable housing, is a key component of achieving inclusive economic growth, and the role it plays in supporting good health and wellbeing and supporting people into work.

3.2 The Housing Strategy will ensure Durham County Council is well positioned to maximise future opportunities for funding support. In this context, the Housing Strategy provides the evidence to identify issues within a housing context and a clear approach to address these issues.

## 4.0 Area of coverage

4.1 The Housing Strategy covers the whole of County Durham.

## 5.0 Steps the council took to publicise the draft Housing Strategy.

5.1 The council publicised the draft Housing Strategy by:

- a) emailing consultees who stated they wished to be kept informed of the next stage of the Housing Strategy consultation from the Principles and Priorities consultation ;
- b) publicising via the council's online consultation portal;
- c) making the draft Housing Strategy available on the council's website;
- d) presentations to 8 AAP's,
- e) engagement with and presentations to 24 Partnerships
- f) Presentation to Members of Scrutiny
- g) 2 Online events
- h) Youth Council presentation
- i) Meetings and workshop with Registered Providers
- j) Meetings and workshop with Durham University

- k) Workshop with Public Health
- l) using the council's corporate notifications, communications and social media outlets; and press releases.

## **6.0 Formal responses to the consultation**

6.1 We received 12 survey responses, and nine representations were received to the formal consultation from organisations and individuals. These are set out in full, with the council's response and schedule of changes to the Housing Strategy in Appendix 1. Representations were made by:

- Believe Housing
- City of Durham Trust
- Durham City Parish Council
- Durham University
- Durham University Students Union
- Durham Police and Crime Commissioner
- Karbon Homes
- Miller Homes
- Public health
- Registered Landlord
- 12 Members of the public

6.2 We also gained feedback from Overview and Scrutiny following a presentation at a meeting on the 22 April, which can be found in Appendix 2

6.3 We undertook two workshops with council colleagues, Registered Providers and Durham University to develop a Twelve-Month Delivery Plan.

## **7.0 Responses from the consultation and consultation events**

7.1 Whilst a range of views came through the consultation and those detailed points have informed the development of the Draft Housing Strategy, the main messages from the consultation can be summarised as follows:

- Continued strong support for the vision, principles and priorities;
- Strong emphasis on the importance of partnership working with partners keen to be involved in the development of the strategy and the delivery plan;
- Ensure appropriate infrastructure is built alongside new housing to support new housing development;
- New development should be focused on brownfield sites to stop building on greenfield sites or in the countryside;
- Support for strong focus on affordable housing. Affordable housing should be recognised as a product of choice, with affordable rental a tenure of choice;



- Better access to affordable housing, including social housing and private rented, in particular for single people, younger people and larger families;
- Support for the links between housing on health and well being;
- More emphasis needed on impact of poor housing on health;
- Continue to improve partnership working with RPs to enable further regeneration of communities and high quality placemaking;
- More focus needed on provision of suitable affordable housing for students;
- Concerns about the impact of student housing in and around the city centre
- Explore the need for additional licensing in Durham;
- Concerns about the cost of living and poverty and affordability of housing;
- Energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions should continue to be a focus in the delivery of the Housing Strategy;
- Housing standards in the private, social and student rental sector was a concern, particularly regarding damp, mould and condensation;
- Need for more meaningful engagement with members of the community and harder to reach groups in decision making; and
- More clarity needed on how priorities will be achieved and timescales.

## **8.0 Changes to the Housing Strategy**

- 8.1 Following consideration of the feedback received a number of changes were made to the Housing Strategy. These can be found in the last column of the table in Appendix 1.
- 8.2 Following consideration of the feedback received, a Twelve-Month Delivery Plan has also been developed in partnership with Registered Providers, Durham University and other relevant partners.

## Appendix 1

### Table of consultation representations and responses and schedule of changes

<b>Priority 1: Increase the delivery of new homes, including secure, affordable housing to meet housing needs together with the infrastructure required.</b>			
<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Council response</b>	<b>Schedule of changes</b>
Karbon Homes	To help us achieve a consistently high supply of new homes we urge the council to ensure that planning is appropriately resourced and able to efficiently process applications, provide prompt feedback where required and to shape a strong Local Plan. We are a willing partner in development and would welcome further discussion with the council on how best to take forward plans to develop on key sites.	Support and comments noted we will continue to work with our partners to increase the delivery of new homes and when we review our Local Plan in the future.	

	<p>Increasing supply does come down to funding however, and although we welcome the decision for Homes England to allow funding for regeneration projects in addition to new builds, they still require net additionality which we have found is not always possible. However, until we get <b>more flexibility in using grant funding for schemes without net additionality</b>, our potential to be involved in regeneration projects will be limited.</p>	<p>Support noted. We will continue to include our partners in our regeneration projects.</p>	<p>Support noted. We will continue to include our partners in our regeneration projects.</p>
Believe	<p>We would welcome an approach to regeneration that uses targeted acquisitions to create additional housing stock in the areas that most need it and where it would improve the quality of homes for residents, however, we would encourage dialogue with registered providers where they represent the largest presence in these communities to ensure a cohesive approach to creating thriving communities with a sense of pride in place.</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed. Wording will be amended to reflect this comment.</p>	<p>Paragraph 4.3 has been amended:</p> <p>We will support the delivery of a range and choice of homes to meet housing need and demand, including market housing for those who can afford it, affordable housing products for those who cannot afford to have their needs met through the market. Alongside the provision of new homes, we will work to <del>bring</del> <b>regenerate our existing housing stock and bring</b> empty homes back in to use, where appropriate, to meet housing needs.</p> <p>Paragraph 4.6 has been amended:</p> <p>The Housing Strategy will be a strategy for County Durham that will be</p>

			<p>developed and delivered in partnership across the county and for the benefit of all of our residents. We will make use of the County Durham Partnership, <del>and its</del> <u>sub-groups including the Housing Forum,</u> <del>and</del> other relevant groups in developing and delivering the Strategy.</p> <p>Paragraph 4.9 has been amended:</p> <p>The Housing Strategy recognises the diversity of communities across County Durham and the differing issues and opportunities they face. It has a role to coordinate activity of the council, its partners and wider investment opportunities to support sustainable, safe, mixed, and balanced and connected communities. We will <del>support</del> <u>pursue</u> regeneration and renewal in our communities, including improving access to outdoor greenspace, bringing empty homes back into use, <u>remodelling the existing stock</u> or <u>using</u> demolition where appropriate.</p> <p>The third bullet in paragraph 5.7 has been amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners <del>in the to</del> <u>identify</u> and management of a <u>pipeline of development sites with an</u></li> </ul>
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			<p><u>emphasis on brownfield sites programme land where available;</u></p> <p>Paragraph 5.59 has been amended:</p> <p>The quality of the environment in which homes are built is as important to our health, wellbeing and prosperity as the buildings themselves. We are committed to ensuring that in future it will be of a high standard in terms of architecture, urban design, sustainability, and innovation. This ensures that new development enhances and complements existing high-quality areas and raises the design standards and quality of areas in need of regeneration. <del>New development should provide local people with civic pride, make them feel safe and secure and help improve the overall image of the county and reflect local distinctiveness. Development needs to be carefully planned to ensure important features and characteristics are protected and enhanced.</del></p> <p>Additional paragraphs added (5.60, 5.61):</p> <p><u>Where a need for regeneration has been identified, we will use a variety of housing regeneration activities such as acquisition and demolition, group repair schemes, environmental improvements</u></p>
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			<p><u>or the facilitation of new development depending on the needs of the area and community. Where appropriate we will also collaborate at a strategic level with our partners, such as Registered Providers, including joint ventures and other suitable mechanisms.</u></p> <p><u>New development should provide local people with civic pride, make them feel safe and secure and help improve the overall image of the county and reflect local distinctiveness. Development needs to be carefully planned to ensure important features and characteristics are protected and enhanced.</u></p>
PCC	SUPPORT	Support noted	
Durham University	Need to reflect on the fact that the student accommodation market is a uniquely functioning part of the private rented sector within County Durham and therefore requires unique action to deliver on the priorities and principles set out in the Housing Strategy.	Recommendation agreed. Wording will be added to reflect this in the Housing Strategy.	<p>Add an additional bullet point to paragraph 5.5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>The student accommodation market is a uniquely functioning part of the private rented sector within County Durham and therefore requires specific action to deliver on the priorities and principles set out in the Housing Strategy to ensure the needs of students are met and the impact on residents is minimised.</u></li> </ul> <p>Add new footnote (1):</p>

			<p><u>There are up to 2,250 private rented properties within the DH1 postcode where students live, mostly in Houses in Multiple Occupation with 3 or more bedrooms.</u></p> <p><u>Add an additional bullet point to paragraph 5.6:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>• Work with partners, including Durham University, to produce a safe, healthy, affordable, secure and good quality student housing stock;</u></li> </ul>
Durham City Trust	We previously pointed out that in Durham city there are areas where 90% or more of the houses are student HMOs, and that the strategy needs to identify ways and means for recovering some of these properties so that they can once again be family homes. We observe that this is not mentioned in the draft Strategy and would stress that it continues to be a very important point here.	The Strategy supports the delivery of homes to enable mixed and balanced communities through the CDP, including policy 16 regarding student housing. This Policy will be reviewed alongside the rest of the CDP in the future.	
Miller Homes	The emerging Housing Strategy should also incorporate opportunities for alternative delivery models such as new settlements, i.e., a Garden Village founded upon Garden City principles. A new Garden Village delivered in the County's high value area could significantly enhance the natural environment, aligned to the	The housing strategy seeks to deliver new homes as set out through the CDP. Developments are viewed on a case by case basis and inline with the relevant policies in the CDP. Alternative delivery methods are supported where appropriate.	

	Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan, and provide high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in a beautiful, healthy and sociable community. There are over 40 approved garden communities nationally and Homes England continues to prioritise both existing schemes and new opportunities.		
A member of the public	Very important that affordable homes to rent are managed by reputable social housing providers. Also to tighten regulations for private landlords. Especially around standard and maintenance of properties and eviction rules.	Comments noted. We continue to work with social housing providers and private landlords to ensure high quality, energy efficient homes and effective landlord services, as outlined in priority 3.	
A member of the public	There are many new houses being built in the area but most are too expensive to buy. I'm aware that new houses entice new people in to the area but this is unhelpful for local people trying to get on the property ladder.	<p>As part of the Housing Strategy, we are committed to delivering housing products that are available in a variety of tenures and types and linked to local income. Affordable housing is included as part of this priority to deliver new homes. This includes a variation of affordable housing products for local people and housing tenures, including social housing.</p> <p>Priority 2 of the Housing Strategy will ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to housing that is safe, secure, affordable and meets their needs. We recognise that there will be no type or tenure that fits all and so a range of products, help and support will be implemented. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the supply of affordable homes.</li> </ul>	



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure affordable housing products are affordable for local people.</li> <li>• Help and support people onto the housing ladder and own their own home through a variety of products;</li> <li>• Help and support people to prevent themselves becoming homeless; and</li> <li>• Enable people to secure and maintain good quality, permanent accommodation.</li> </ul>	
A member of the public	Stop building on greenfields	<p>The Strategy supports the CDP which is based on the principle of allocating brownfield land first wherever possible, and only then utilising sustainable greenfield sites.</p> <p>A full and robust assessment of brownfield sites and other urban land has been undertaken within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Brownfield Land Register to understand the level of suitable, deliverable land across the county.</p>	
A member of the public	New houses should only be built on previously used land or brown sites!! There are lots of empty dwellings that could be brought up to standard rather than all the houses being built from scratch. Green land needs to be protected. Also areas that have multiple new houses built need more local services to meet the increasing demand e.g GPs, dentists, school	<p>The Strategy supports the County Durham Plan which is based on the principle of allocating brownfield land first wherever possible, and only then utilising sustainable greenfield sites.</p> <p>A full and robust assessment of brownfield sites and other urban land has been undertaken within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Brownfield Land Register to understand the level of suitable, deliverable land across the county.</p>	

	places etc. This is not currently happening in North West Durham where the number of new builds is huge but local services are declining not improving. Yes, I agree everyone deserves good quality housing but this should not be to the detriment of existing locals.	Comments noted. Priority 1 of the Housing Strategy includes the delivery of infrastructure as part of the delivery of the delivery of new homes. This includes; To deliver infrastructure as set out in the County Durham Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and via s106 contributions.	
A member of the public	Make housing accessible to everyone	The Housing Strategy will ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to housing that is safe, secure, affordable and meets their needs. We recognise that there will be no type or tenure that fits all and so a range of products, help and support will be implemented. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the supply of affordable homes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure affordable housing products are affordable for local people.</li> <li>• Help and support people onto the housing ladder and own their own home through a variety of products;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Help and support people to prevent themselves becoming homeless; and</li> <li>• Enable people to secure and maintain good quality, permanent accommodation.</li> </ul>	
A member of the public	It is unacceptable to build new homes on green field sites, when there are many streets of empty homes within the county. Town centres lie empty and residential areas could be created here.	The Strategy supports the CDP which is based on the principle of allocating brownfield land first wherever possible, and only then utilising sustainable greenfield sites.	

		A full and robust assessment of brownfield sites and other urban land has been undertaken within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Brownfield Land Register to understand the level of suitable, deliverable land across the county.	
	New homes have third party interests with uncapped maintenance charges. This is unacceptable.	This issue will be picked up as part of the review of the County Durham Plan. This will be explored with Development Management and legal colleagues to understand the scope of this in future schemes.	
A member of the public	It's not rocket science. I'm a home owner and always have been but it common sense to see we need more different sized, rented properties that people can afford, to prevent homelessness, financial hardship etc etc etc. If you don't address this we will end up like America with people living in tents on the street, under under passes etc etc. I would say prevention is better than cure but maybe to late for that. You allowed hundreds of student flats why can't you build some 1 beds for single people on low wages. Cost you more in the long run if you don't.	<p>As part of the Housing Strategy, we are committed to delivering housing products that are available in a variety of tenures and types and linked to local income. Homes should be affordable for local people with a choice of products that households can afford without falling into debt.</p> <p>Priority 2 of the Housing Strategy will ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to housing that is safe, secure, affordable and meets their needs. We recognise that there will be no type or tenure that fits all and so a range of products, help and support will be implemented. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the supply of affordable homes.</li> <li>• Ensure affordable housing products are affordable for local people.</li> <li>• Help and support people onto the housing ladder and own their own home through a variety of products;</li> <li>• Help and support people to prevent themselves becoming homeless; and</li> <li>• Enable people to secure and maintain good quality, permanent accommodation.</li> </ul>	

<p>A member of the public</p>	<p>I have only just become aware of this issue having recently been lied to by the builder and purchasing on a new estate at Aykley Heads. The issue is Fleecehold and the con that is non adoption by the local authority. To my cost I am learning first hand just how draconian , threatening and totally unregulated private management Company's are. The policy of the builder not asking the local authority to adopt land may be financially lucrative in these times of austerity however what it is doing is causing a major snowball effect that local authorities will end up with at the door at some point in the future. Unadopted areas are no longer brought up to any planning standard as the local authority no longer needs to maintain them. Residents receive unjustified and exorbitant bills from management companies for them to do little or no maintenance, all without any legal form of redress. These previously adopted areas are now nothing more than banked land for the builder to keep hold of and monopolise such that others wishing to develop can't. This whole process of non adoption is leading to those residents double taxed through management fees and full council tax</p>	<p>This issue will be picked up as part of the review of the County Durham Plan. This will be explored with Development Management and legal colleagues to understand the scope of this in future schemes.</p>	
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	fees. This is not a community or area that anyone would wish to live in and does not achieve anything set out in DCC housing strategy		
A member of the public	How can you increase delivery when building has slowed to a virtual halt and very little social housing appears to be planned.	The Housing Strategy seeks to deliver a range of housing products, including affordable housing through the Council Housing Delivery Programme, delivery of affordable housing in line with policy 15 of the CDP, supporting registered providers to deliver affordable housing products through their investment plans, regeneration of empty homes, where appropriate.	
A member of the public	Focus on creating new homes on brownfield sites	The Strategy supports the CDP which is based on the principle of allocating brownfield land first wherever possible, and only then utilising sustainable greenfield sites.  A full and robust assessment of brownfield sites and other urban land has been undertaken within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Brownfield Land Register to understand the level of suitable, deliverable land across the county.	
A member of the public	Energy efficient solar powered on bungalows	The strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards achieving the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan. We will also maximise the opportunities available to address fuel poverty through combining advice schemes and heating improvements and targeting interventions at those most in need, whilst new homes will be designed in line with current energy efficiency standards.  As a minimum, new homes will be designed in line with current and future energy efficiency standards. In	

		<p>addition, we will continue to explore opportunities to deliver measures above and beyond standards including utilising new and emerging technologies.</p> <p>This includes green energy aims including all new developments to have green energy generation schemes, and energy efficient, carbon passive technology to be used on new and existing buildings.</p>	
A member of the public	Affordable housing when your council tax is one of the highest in the country ! Give your ceos and big wigs a salary deduction ! Stop being so greedy. Stop building on the green spaces and actually invest in other areas before building new ones! To have bigger and more housing we need bigger schools bigger doctors.	<p>The Strategy supports the CDP which is based on the principle of allocating brownfield land first wherever possible, and only then utilising sustainable greenfield sites.</p> <p>A full and robust assessment of brownfield sites and other urban land has been undertaken within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Brownfield Land Register to understand the level of suitable, deliverable land across the county.</p>	
		<p>Priority 1 of the Housing Strategy include the delivery of infrastructure as part of the delivery of the delivery of new homes. This includes</p> <p>To deliver infrastructure as set out in the County Durham Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and via s106 contributions.</p>	

<p>A member of the public</p>	<p>I completely agree that purpose built student accommodation will alleviate the current trend for allowing residential property to be changed to HMO status or flats for students, but it is absolutely essential that the concerns of residents really are listened to. The plan already identifies under Priority 2 that “Housing stock in the second-hand market may not be available in some areas, for example in the city centre”.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> All elements of existing policies must be given equal weight, including the negative impact HMOs have on residents in terms of noise, waste and disturbance. (In St Monica Grove just 4 houses, all situated within 100m, house 20 students! NOT a balanced community). In addition, a ban on further HMO development within 3 miles of the city centre should be written into the policy so that this cannot be circumvented.</p> <p><b>The financial cost to the council of student accommodation.</b> This year the council is over £9million in deficit because of reduced council tax income through Category N exemptions. This is a significant amount and impacts on the lives of</p>	<p>The Strategy supports the delivery of homes to enable mixed and balanced communities through the CDP, including policy 16 regarding student housing.</p> <p>The council has introduced Article 4 Directions in four areas in and around Durham City, which means that within the area of these directions, planning permission is required for a change of use to a house of multiple occupation (HMO). These Article 4 Directions, in combination with Parts 2 and 3 of this policy will serve to deliver student accommodation to create inclusive places in line with the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.</p> <p>Policy 16 will be reviewed alongside the rest of the CDP in the future.</p>	
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	<p>residents across the county and the services the council can provide.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> This plan could change this by categorically stating that all housing where there are 3 unrelated adults <b>must</b> be licensed (so there is a clear picture of HMO distribution) and that every HMO will no longer be exempt of council tax. This would in part address this deficit and provide much needed funds to help schemes, eg for housing the disabled, to move forward.</p>		
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Public Health	We support this priority and welcome the links which are made between both housing and health and housing and other wider determinants of health for example education and economic opportunities.	Support Noted	
	In relation to specific needs which require intervention we welcome the focus on affordable housing which is particularly important to people who experience poverty. It would be helpful to understand when affordable housing need in the County will be met if 836 affordable houses are provided each year and if there is an opportunity to bring forward the provision of more affordable housing to more rapidly meet the housing needs of our more vulnerable residents.	Comments noted	
	We welcome the inclusion of older people in the groups which require specific intervention to ensure that their housing needs are met.	Support Noted	
	We welcome the inclusion of people who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness in the groups that require specific intervention and we note that there is a homeless strategy with a vision to eradicate homelessness. We recommend that the needs of pregnant women are	Support Noted	

	<p>highlighted in relation to cohorts particularly vulnerable to homelessness. The Kings Fund, Housing and Health, 2018, noted that homelessness and temporary accommodation during pregnancy are associated with an increased risk of preterm birth, low birth weight, poor mental health in infants and children, and developmental delay (Kings Fund, Housing and Health, 2018)</p>		
	<p>We recommend that families who are pregnant, who have babies and children are included in the groups with specific needs.</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed. Wording will be added to reflect this in the Housing Strategy.</p>	<p>An additional bullet has been added to paragraph 5.5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Families who are pregnant, who have babies and children will also have specific needs that will change as their families grow. Housing that will accommodate growing families and adapt to their changing needs will be required across all tenures.</u></li> </ul>
		<p>Recommendation agreed. Wording will be added to reflect this in the Housing Strategy.</p>	<p>The third bullet in paragraph 5.5 has been amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an increase in the number of people presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness in County Durham, <u>with pregnant women particularly vulnerable to homelessness</u>, and includes a rise in the complexity of cases that are being presented. The Homelessness</li> </ul>

			Strategy sets out its vision to eradicate homelessness and ensure everyone has a safe place to live and supports the Housing Strategy.
<b>Priority 2: Ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe and secure housing that support health and wellbeing.</b>			
<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Council response</b>	<b>Schedule of changes</b>
Karbon homes	We strongly welcome the focus on affordable housing and believe that it is important to look at a variety of tenures and types. We have delivered several Rent to Buy schemes in Durham over the last few years and the demand for these have been strong. We would like to see this continue and are pleased to see this explicitly mentioned in the strategy.	Support noted.	
	We believe that Durham Key Options (DKO) is the best approach to balancing out demand with fairness and giving an element of choice for applicants, and as a partner of DKO, we would like to be involved in any review of this.	Support noted. We will continue to work with our partners in the delivery of the Housing Strategy.	
Believe	We would encourage this priority is reviewed and reflects the need to provide affordable housing with a choice of tenure, this priority focuses on the need to provide people with support onto the housing ladder rather than on the links between a safe and secure home and health outcomes. We would suggest a	Recommendation agreed. The wording will be amended to reflect this change.	Paragraph 5.15 has been amended:  Homes should be affordable for local people with a choice of products <u>and tenures</u> that households can afford without falling into debt. Home ownership should be accessible to all. Those on lower wages should <u>also be able to afford to rent their own homes or</u>

	clearer priority that encompasses other tenure type and recognises that owning a home is not the only option, as the review of the strategy has focused on the need to tenure blind developments, a focus on home ownership as a priority will continue to develop a sense of stigma which is currently experienced by some tenants in social rented homes.		aspire to home ownership with a range of options available to assist them.
		Recommendation agreed. The wording will be amended to reflect this change.	An additional bullet has been added to paragraph 5.21:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Help and support people in gaining secure rented accommodation they can afford.</a></li> </ul>
PCC	SUPPORT There needs to be further reference to other Partnership for a like the Local Criminal Justice Board which has a remit to improve support pathways for victims and people who commit offences.	Support noted. Reference will be made to this board in this strategy and related relevant strategies.	Paragraph 5.56 has been amended:  Continue engagement and joint working with <a href="#">Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)</a> and other Criminal Justice Agencies, <a href="#">including the Local Criminal Justice Board</a> , to prioritise and maintain housing pathways in the Justice System.
	In respect of increasing complexity, we would also ask the Temporary Housing Strategy to take into consideration feedback our services is that women's accommodations are often targeted by perpetrators, and they often support several women within the same accommodation who are known to the same perpetrators	These comments will be fed into the Temporary Housing Strategy.	

A member of the public	You need to clarify exactly what you mean. Appropriate housing is limited on new estates to houses and few if any bungalows. New estates are often not close to GP surgeries or without decent bus services. Safe and secure needs to be clearly defined. New estates often have no footpaths.	Appropriate Housing refers to housing that is suitable to meet the needs of the local residents in that area.	
		Comments noted. Priority 1 of the Housing Strategy include the delivery of infrastructure as part of the delivery of the delivery of new homes. This includes To deliver infrastructure as set out in the County Durham Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and via s106 contributions.	
Other	There is no point in building new houses if there isn't the infrastructure and resources to support them. New houses require access to schools, health and social care, affordable and accessible transport systems, jobs and leisure facilities. There's is no point in churning up the countryside for new houses when County Durham - and in particular East Durham - has an abundance of poorly maintained, derelict properties, and abandoned factories. Invest in the devastated towns and villages, demolish abandoned brownfields sites and rebuild affordable housing in them - it's already been done on old factory sites in Peterlee. Look at the ex mining villages and develop a strategy to regenerate them instead if	Comments noted. Priority 1 of the Housing Strategy include the delivery of infrastructure as part of the delivery of the delivery of new homes. This includes To deliver infrastructure as set out in the County Durham Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and via s106 contributions.	
		<p>The Strategy supports the CDP which is based on the principle of allocating brownfield land first wherever possible, and only then utilising sustainable greenfield sites.</p> <p>A full and robust assessment of brownfield sites and other urban land has been undertaken within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Brownfield Land Register to understand the level of suitable, deliverable land across the county.</p> <p>The CDP contains specific policies regarding development in the countryside to limit the amount of development allowed.</p>	

	churning up Durham City itself and destroying its heritage. Demolish failing town centres and derelict buildings. Bring some pride back to the north east and its heritage.	Priority 5 of the Housing Strategy seeks to ensure high quality placemaking, focusing on communities and the wider environment surrounding housing. This includes ensuring the wider environment of communities is of high quality, including raising the quality of the wider environment in communities in need of regeneration, through the delivery of Targeted Delivery Plans, creating sustainable communities, safer living environments and well designed place.	
Property Owner	There is a new Minister for Common Sense. It is common sense that it is more efficient to refurbish a home to be of high quality (e.g. by insulating it) than to demolish it and build a new one (with insulation). You should bring empty homes back into use whenever it is possible to do so.	As part of Priority 1 we will work with landlords to bring empty properties back into use, where appropriate, in order to meet local needs, by working with landlords, acquiring properties and delivering Targeted Delivery Plans (TDPs).	
A member of the public	Social housing should take priority over high value, luxury new builds which are been built in locations that can attract a higher price due to views etc	Affordable housing is included as part of this priority to deliver new homes. This includes a variation of affordable housing products and housing tenures, including social housing.	
A member of the public	Infrastructure to support. There is not enough school places, doctors, dentist or A & E services in this area	Priority 1 of the Housing Strategy includes the delivery of infrastructure as part of the delivery of the delivery of new homes. This includes: To deliver infrastructure as set out in the County Durham Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and via s106 contributions.	
Vol/Comm org	I host Ukrainian refugees. I was advised by a council representative that in order to access help with housing they first had to be rendered	Comments noted.	

	homeless. This seems to be inconsistent with your aims to prevent homelessness.		
A member of the public	Greater resources and focus should be given on ensuring housing standards are being upheld by landlords and housing organisations, so that they have more motivation and urgency in dealing with issues with housing for their tenants such as issues with damp and mold, structural issues, animal infestations and other issues a tenant may face.	Priority 3 of the housing strategy will ensure high quality, energy efficient homes and effective landlord services. This takes into account private and social landlords. As part of this priorities, we will continue to improve housing standards and conditions and deliver new stock to the highest standards. This includes through review of housing conditions in the private sector, continuing to maintain positive relationships with private landlords, effectively implementing our selective licensing scheme.	
A member of the public	Durham is a lovely area for walking and fresh air so it's important that houses are not built on green space areas.	The Strategy supports the CDP which is based on the principle of allocating brownfield land first wherever possible, and only then utilising sustainable greenfield sites.  A full and robust assessment of brownfield sites and other urban land has been undertaken within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the Brownfield Land Register to understand the level of suitable, deliverable land across the county.	
Registered Social Landlord	Cost of homes	Affordable housing and being able to run a home are identified as issues in the Housing Strategy and addressed throughout principle 2, and priorities 1 and 2, of the Housing Strategy. We will support the delivery of a range and choice of homes to meet housing need and demand, including market housing for those who can afford it, affordable housing products for those who cannot afford to have their needs met through the market. Alongside the provision of new homes, we will	

		work to bring empty homes back in to use, where appropriate, to meet housing needs.	
A member of the public	Bit of a silly question, of course, it's common sense. In respect of empty properties, your supposed to be redeveloping them with supposed government money to bring them back into use. I have reported 2 in Belmont. 1 empty for over 15 years and the other around 10. They still remain unlive in. I.e nothing was done and these houses continue to deteriorate.	As part of Priority 1 we will work with landlords to bring empty properties back into use, where appropriate, in order to meet local needs, by working with landlords, acquiring properties and delivering Targeted Delivery Plans (TDPs).	
A member of the public	Appropriate housing? I know of families with 2 children only permitted to look for 2 bed houses, while childless couples are given 3 bed houses. Not sure how that works.	<p>As part of the Housing Strategy, we are committed to delivering housing products that are available in a variety of tenures and types and linked to local income. Homes should be affordable for local people with a choice of products that households can afford without falling into debt.</p> <p>Priority 2 of the Housing Strategy will ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to housing that is safe, secure, affordable and meets their needs. We recognise that there will be no type or tenure that fits all and so a range of products, help and support will be implemented. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the supply of affordable homes.</li> <li>• Ensure affordable housing products are affordable for local people.</li> <li>• Help and support people onto the housing ladder and own their own home through a variety of products;</li> </ul>	



Public Health	We support this priority and welcome the explicit links which are made between appropriate, safe and secure housing and health and wellbeing.	Support noted	
	At our recent meeting we shared a presentation covering the evidence base regarding housing and health. We recommend that some of the key points in terms of the negative impact of poor housing conditions are highlighted, for example the negative impact of cold or damp homes on physical health for example, the development or worsening of asthma, respiratory infections, coughs, wheezing and shortness of breath. For cold homes there is increased risk of heart disease and cardiac events and also worsening musculoskeletal conditions such as arthritis. Further cold and damp homes have a significant impact on mental health, with depression and anxiety more common among people living in these conditions. Overcrowding is also associated with specific health risks including increased rates of infectious disease.	Comments and recommendations noted. We have consulted further to gain specific details regarding the impact of housing and health that will be included in this priority and in Priority 3.	Additional paragraph added (5.19):  <u>Housing quality has a significant and material impact on health and wellbeing. A decent home gives us a foundation for living a healthy life. Ensuring people have good and secure housing can help to delay or reduce a person’s need for health and care services in the future and help them retain their independence, health and wellbeing for longer.</u>
	We appreciate the link made to the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy in the principles and aligning the Housing Strategy and the Joint	Comments noted this will be reflected in the delivery plan.	

	<p>Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making smoking history</li> <li>• Enabling healthy weight for all</li> <li>• Improving mental health, resilience and wellbeing</li> <li>• Reducing alcohol harms</li> </ul> <p>Provides an opportunity for the Housing Strategy to be explicit about how work will be taken forward through work with housing to address the health priorities for the County.</p>		
	<p>We also welcome the focus on homelessness in this section and the aim to reduce the number of households being placed in temporary accommodation and that actions include both a temporary accommodation strategy and also the review of the choice based lettings system, Durham Key Options, and the importance of ensuring access to housing for those with complex needs. We recommend that there is reference in this work to fair and equitable access, which would ensure that those with the highest level of needs receive the support they need to have equal access to housing because people with complex needs are disadvantaged and there is</p>	<p>Recommendation agreed. The wording will be amended to reflect this change. Comments will also be reflected in the delivery plan.</p>	<p>Paragraph 5.21 has been amended:</p> <p>We want to ensure that everyone has fair and <del>equal</del> equitable access to housing that is safe, secure, affordable and meets their needs.</p>

	significant evidence that having a suitable home is the most important factor in addressing a range of complex needs, including substance misuse.		
<b>Priority 3: Ensure high quality, energy efficient homes and effective landlord services.</b>			
<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Council response</b>	<b>Schedule of changes</b>
Karbon Homes	We have a range of supported housing in Durham, with a total of 392 flats in County Durham across thirteen retirement living schemes, and we also have 54 Extra Care homes (52 flats and 2 bungalows), as well as 60 beds in 18 supported accommodation schemes. We acknowledge that some of these are becoming outdated, but we are now exploring what we can do to improve them, and we would welcome a discussion with Durham County Council about how we can work with them on the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP).	Comments noted. We will continue discussions with registered providers regarding how we can work together including involvement with the SHIP.	
Believe	We would encourage meaningful engagement with the social rented sector in the delivery of regeneration projects that meet local needs and create sustainable communities	Comments noted. We welcome meaningful engagement with the social rented sector in the delivery of regeneration projects and will continue this through into the production and delivery of the action plan.	
Durham University	We would strongly highlight our proposal that consideration be given to an Additional Licensing scheme for the student private rented sector in	Comment noted. The wording will be amended to reflect this change.	Paragraph 5.48 has been amended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing to effectively implement our Selective Licensing Scheme <b>and</b></li> </ul>

	Durham City. We believe a cost-neutral solution can be found that will benefit both student and non-student residents. Additional Licensing also has the support of the Parish Council.		<a href="#">explore extending licencing arrangements to improve standards where appropriate.</a>
PCC	SUPPORT There also needs to be a commitment to evaluating these to assess impact on community safety, and on renters.	Support noted. This evaluation will be reflected in the delivery plan.	
Durham City Trust	Priority 3: we pointed out that Durham city is not eligible for the Selective Licensing Scheme and therefore an Additional Licensing Scheme is needed to address the well-evidenced shortcomings of the condition and management of HMOs (97% of the County's HMOs are in Durham city). We continue to urge that this should be included in the Strategy.	Comments noted. The Council will continue to assess areas for licensing based on robust evidence bases.	
A member of the public	Student housing in Durham City should be included in the selective licensing scheme. Student landlords have taken over more than half the housing stock in the city centre, and a lot of it is in dire condition. It may seem that Durham students are not in need of the support of a selective licensing scheme because they pay exorbitant rents.	Comments noted. The Council will continue to assess areas for licensing based on robust evidence bases.	

<p>A member of the public</p>	<p>Too many people are unable to get on the property ladder because of housing prices. In my opinion, landlords then take advantage of this. They increase rents to a point that people are unable to save up to buy their own house. It's also important for landlords to endure their properties are safe and efficiently run.</p>	<p>Comments noted. Priority 1 of the housing strategy addresses affordable housing, including affordable rent as a tenure of choice. Landlord services will be addressed more fully within priority 3.</p>	
<p>A member of the public</p>	<p>Despite numerous complaints re the HMOs at numbers 1 and 3 St Monica Grove being untidy, having wood, piles of bricks etc in the garden so vermin have been seen, no action has been taken as the landlord has stated these things are needed for future building work. This is clearly unacceptable. Building work should not be prioritised above health concerns. The drive has been changed from concrete to loose gravel which moves onto the footpath – something also not permitted but currently allowed – and plans for the alteration of the building to remove a window which overlooks a neighbouring property have also not been carried out. Too often timeframes for completion of work have been allowed to 'drift' and move and there seems to be a complete lack of robust enforcement.</p>	<p>General license conditions for all Houses in Multiple Occupation are laid out as part of the Housing Act 2004, which are requirements in order to obtain an HMO licence, with enforcement measures for non-compliance.</p> <p>Planning permission timeframes are in place, which come into action once planning permission has been granted, this is usually three years from when planning is granted.</p>	

	<p><b>Action:</b> clear enforcement timeframes and criteria need to be set in black and white so enforcement officers are empowered to take robust action. Failure to meet these timeframes should be met with clearly defined fines. This could be set within this priority although detailed information may need to be agreed and set out in a more specific plan.</p> <p>In addition:          There is a clear need for social housing across County Durham, including in around Durham City itself. As the University has grown, so areas which would otherwise have provided much needed social housing such as the terraces of Mistletoe Street, Laburnum Avenue etc have become a virtual student village. This must not permeate into other areas or Durham will simply become a ghost city out of term time and shops will be unable to remain sustainable financially. To have a city with such remarkable World Heritage sites as the Cathedral and Castle reduced to empty shop fronts or innumerable eating establishments reflects very poorly on long term planning and this</p>		
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	plan should attempt to remedy that as suggested above.		
A member of the public	The national fuel poverty charity state that the cost of living and energy crisis has dragged millions more households into a situation where they are forced to decide whether to heat their home or for buy food. in 2021 approx 4.5 million households were in fuel poverty increasing to in 2023 approx 6.6 million. cold homes are damaging the lives & health of low-income households meaning thousands of households in County Durham can't afford to pay their energy bills and are in serious amounts of debt and they need Durham Council to provide them with support to have a warmer home and advice on their energy bills especially over the winter period. As a result, otherwise the numbers of elderly residents, children and low income families urgently need help from Durham Council to make their homes warmer and reduce their energy bills and debts.	<p>The Housing Strategy states that homes should be affordable for local people with a choice of products that households can afford without falling into debt. Home ownership should be accessible to all. Those on lower wages should also be able to aspire to home ownership with a range of options available to assist them, which will be delivered through Priority 2.</p> <p>The strategy will also support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards achieving the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan. We will also maximise the opportunities available to address fuel poverty through combining advice schemes and heating improvements and targeting interventions at those most in need, whilst new homes will be designed in line with current energy efficiency standards.</p>	
Registered Social Landlord	Solar powered help with bills	The strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards achieving the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan. We will also maximise the opportunities	

		available to address fuel poverty through combining advice schemes and heating improvements and targeting interventions at those most in need, whilst new homes will be designed in line with current energy efficiency standards.	
Vol/Comm Org	On Priority 3 we pointed out that Durham city is not eligible for the Selective Licensing Scheme and therefore an Additional Licensing Scheme is needed to address the well-evidenced shortcomings of the condition and management of HMOs (97% of the County's HMOs are in Durham city). We continue to urge that this should be included in the Strategy.	The Council will continue to assess areas for licensing based on robust evidence bases.	
A member of the public	I reported a problem with my roof in June. There was all summer to look at it. Finally get it looked at and needs extensive work, needing scaffolding. Work planned for 5 January.	Comments noted.	
A member of the public	For true energy efficiency you need to ensure all new builds have solar panels and electric vehicle chargers etc. no new estates anywhere in co Durham have these.	The strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards achieving the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan. We will also maximise the opportunities available to address fuel poverty through combining advice schemes and heating improvements and targeting interventions at those most in need, whilst new homes will be designed in line with current energy efficiency standards.	



		The County now has a Parking Standards and Accessibility SPD, which all new builds must comply with.	
Public Health	<p>We support this priority, and we welcome the focus on improving the quality of privately rented sector housing stock because the older housing stock which is in poorer condition is often home to poorer and more vulnerable people. We note that this housing stock is more likely to have a category 1 hazard than other types of housing stock and both the tenure and the social and health conditions experienced by tenants make it more challenging for these hazards to be addressed.</p> <p>We recommend that the ‘we will do this by’ actions should include specific actions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve the quality of the housing stock with the aim of ensuring that housing is free from damp and mould.</li> <li>• inform residents of hazards e.g. damp and mould which are a specific risk to their health and inform residents about how they can be supported to have identified hazards rectified.</li> </ul>	Recommendation agreed. The wording will be amended to reflect this change.	<p>Additional paragraphs added (5.38, 5.39, 5.40):</p> <p><u>Improving the quality of the housing stock with the aim of ensuring that housing is free from damp and mould.</u></p> <p><u>Working with partners to ensure robust processes are in place including a reporting mechanism for frontline staff.</u></p> <p><u>Working with partners to ensure that residents are informed of hazards, and how to prevent them e.g. damp and mould which are a specific risk to their health and inform residents about how they can be supported to have identified hazards rectified.</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide access to information and a reporting mechanism for frontline staff, including health regarding hazards in the home and who to contact to ensure residents are supported to have identified hazards rectified.</li> </ul>		
<p>Public Health</p>	<p>We welcome the reference to 'Awaab's Law' and we recommend that in this section explicit reference is made to mould and the risk this presents to health.</p>	<p>Comments noted, wording will be added in priority 3 to make explicit reference to mould and the risk this presents to health.</p>	<p>Additional paragraphs added (5.28, 5.29, 5.30):</p> <p><u>Housing is an important determinant of health. Condensation and damp in homes can lead to mould growth, and inhaling mould spores can cause allergic type reactions, the development or worsening of asthma, respiratory infections, coughs, wheezing and shortness of breath. Living in a cold home can worsen asthma and other respiratory illnesses and increase the risk of other diseases and worsen other health conditions. Cold or damp conditions can have a significant impact on mental health, with depression and anxiety more common among people living in these conditions.</u></p> <p><u>Housing is particularly important in ensuring a healthy start in life and is a key factor causing health inequalities. Some groups are more vulnerable to these housing conditions, such as</u></p>

			<p><u>children and young people, the elderly or people with pre-existing illness, are at a greater risk of ill health associated with cold or damp homes.</u></p> <p><u>Some groups of people are more likely to live in poor quality cold and damp housing conditions, including households with an older person living in them, households with a lone parent, households with children, low-income households and households with people from minority ethnic backgrounds.</u></p>
<b>Priority 4: Ensure a comprehensive range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, disabled people and children and young people, including specialist accommodation and support.</b>			
<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Council response</b>	<b>Schedule of changes</b>
Karbon Homes	The Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act 2023, which achieved Royal Assent in July, is an important piece of legislation for this sector and as part of this, local authorities have been asked to create local Supported Housing Strategies. We are keen to work closely with Durham County Council and contribute our experience of managing and building supported schemes to ensure that this strategy is successful. However, as part of this, we would welcome a discussion about how we improve the viability of supported housing	Comments noted. We would welcome discussions with our partners regarding supported housing and related strategies and how supported housing can be delivered and managed across the county.	

	schemes and ensure that the revenue we generate is stable.		
Believe	We find the use of a Housing First approach of interest, we would be interested to understand what impact the Local Authority feels this change will have and how this will be implemented.	We will work with partners as we further develop the Housing First approach.	
PCC	SUPPORT The plan to achieving this is also comprehensive, however like above would ask that the pathway for victim of crime, specifically non-domestic crime is clarified	Support noted. Recommendation agreed. The wording will be amended to reflect this change.	Paragraph 5.48 has been amended:  Others that may need support are victims of crime including <u>non-domestic crime</u> , anti-social behaviour, <del>and</del> domestic abuse and people involved in the Criminal Justice System and prison releases.

Miller	This priority should include an objective for the Council to consider allocating new sites for purpose-built supported and specialist housing through the new Local Plan. These sites could be allocated in whole or in part, for example a Garden Village allocation could include a policy requirement for an identified need set out in Priority 4, thus delivering multi-generational communities with designated specialist-care provisions.	Comments noted. Priority 5 does acknowledge potential options in high quality placemaking, where appropriate.	
A member of the public	Amethyst housing prices out all of these groups	The delivery of affordable housing products is addressed through priority 1 and in line with relevant policies of the CDP	
Public Health	<p>We support this priority which has a welcome focus on population groups across the life course which may be more vulnerable regarding both poor housing quality and affordability.</p> <p>We recommend that this section is strengthened by highlighting the vulnerabilities of pregnant women, babies and children in relation to housing and this could provide helpful context for the detail provided in the actions regarding specific groups of children and young people.</p>	Recommendations agreed. The wording will be amended to reflect this change. The Approach to Wellbeing is applied to the Housing Strategy as standard practice and will be specified in the Delivery and Monitoring section.	<p>Paragraph 5.48 has been amended:</p> <p>This includes through a Housing First Approach which prioritises getting people quickly into stable homes. Others that may need support are, <u>pregnant women and with babies</u>, victims of crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse and people involved in the Criminal Justice System and prison releases.</p> <p>Paragraph 5.53 has been amended:</p> <p>Undertake a Needs Led Accommodation Review (NLAR) to consider longer term specialist accommodation needs – the NLAR is considering the longer term needs of specific groups including</p>

	<p>We recommend that in the ‘we will do this by’ action section that specific actions are included to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• include the need for single occupancy homes, particularly for vulnerable men and the need for a social space/community facilities which are easily accessible/in single occupancy developments. Here we recognise that there is a link with the homelessness strategy.</li> <li>• include the importance of social support from family and friends and the need for people to have a choice of where to live so that they can sustain their social and family support networks.</li> <li>• include using the Approach to Wellbeing to ensure that all</li> </ul>		<p><u>pregnant women</u>, children and young people, older people, people with mental health or learning difficulties, and homelessness. The join up between housing and social care is important to assist many residents to live independently and to plan for future housing stock provision.</p> <p>Paragraph 5.54 has been amended:</p> <p>Assessing the need for single occupancy homes <u>with social space and community facilities</u>, particularly for vulnerable men <u>and women</u> <del>and the need for a social space/ community facilities which are easily accessible/in single occupancy developments.</del></p> <p>Additional paragraph added (5.58):</p> <p><u>Including the importance of social support from family and friends and the need for people to have a choice of where to live so that they can sustain their social and family support networks</u></p>
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	groups, including older and vulnerable people, have the opportunity to influence their communities so that they can feel safe in their community.		
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<b>Priority 5: Ensure high quality placemaking, creating safe, accessible, prosperous and sustainable places to live.</b>			
<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Council response</b>	<b>Schedule of changes</b>
Believe	We would welcome the opportunity to continue to work with the Local Authority on placemaking activity and share our expertise to help deliver this priority, we feel as an	Comments noted, we will continue to work with our partners on placemaking activity and its delivery through the Strategy action plan.	

	organisation we have a vital role to play.		
PCC	<p>SUPPORT</p> <p>Commitment to sustainability and regard for social value is important and I value this priority. This priority could expand on how this housing strategy will be assisting in the Council's efforts to achieve these two goals. It would also be important to explain how impact will be assessed.</p>	<p>Support noted. Wording will be added to this priority to reflect this addition.</p>	<p>Paragraph 5.60 has been amended:</p> <p>The quality of the environment in which houses are built is as important to our health, wellbeing and prosperity as the buildings themselves. We are committed to ensuring that in future it will be of a high standard in terms of architecture, urban design, sustainability, and innovation. This ensures that new development enhances and complements existing high-quality areas and raises the design standards and quality of areas in need of regeneration <u>and contributes to the social value of an area.</u></p> <p>Additional paragraph added (5.61):</p> <p><u>Where a need for regeneration has been identified, we will use a variety of housing regeneration activities such as acquisition and demolition, group repair schemes, environmental improvements or the facilitation of new development depending on the needs of the area and community. Where appropriate we will also collaborate at a strategic level with our partners, such as Registered Providers, including joint ventures and other suitable mechanisms.</u></p>



			<p>Paragraph 5.62 has been amended:</p> <p>New development should provide local people with civic pride, make them feel safe and secure and help improve the overall image of the county and reflect local distinctiveness. Development needs to be carefully planned to ensure important features and characteristics are protected and enhanced, <u>where the needs of the community are reflected.</u></p>
Miller Homes	Miller supports the Council's core objectives and is committed to delivering high quality new communities. In accordance with our earlier comments to Priority 1, a well-planned Garden Village could satisfy all of the core objectives of this priority.	Support and comments noted. Priority 5 acknowledges potential options in high quality placemaking, where appropriate.	
A voluntary & community organisation	This expression of Priority 5 is a fundamental statement of values and is thoroughly endorsed by the Trust.	Support noted.	

A member of the public	<p>The term placemaking does not appear in the Oxford dictionary and therefore this needs to be reviewed and rephrased.</p> <p>Most of all please review the poor phrasing of this question in the light of my comments on the term 'place making'. A place means somewhere that exists already eg Durham and you cannot recreate it. You can redevelop and improve but not make it!</p>	<p>Comments noted. Placemaking is a recognised term referring to the planning of areas beyond buildings. It is defined by the UK government and Homes England as 'at the core of Homes England's new <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a> and the Government has recently launched the <a href="#">Office for Place</a> to help councils create beautiful, successful and enduring places'.</p> <p>This is therefore a relevant term in the context of this Housing Strategy and in its delivery plan.</p>	
	<p>You need to say high quality developments. You cannot reconcile prosperity with the sites chosen for many estates which are outside major towns, have limited public transport and nowhere in the Durham area has access to the Metro whereas places like Jarrow have. This directly impacts prosperity and access to services and jobs etc. Developments are never sustainable unless they include solar panels etc.</p>	<p>Comments noted. Developments are considered with sustainability and prosperity in mind and with the relevant CDP policies applied. Priority 1 addresses the need for appropriate infrastructure alongside new developments.</p> <p>Priority 5 addresses the need for the consideration of sustainability, connectivity, employability prospects of new developments to ensure high quality place making and prosperous communities.</p>	
A member of the public	<p>Sustainable is the key word here. New housing should not be built on green fields and should not be destroying natural habitats just so people with money can buy high value homes with a lovely view!!</p>	<p>The Strategy supports the CDP which is based on the principle of allocating brownfield land first wherever possible, and only then utilising sustainable greenfield sites.</p> <p>A full and robust assessment of brownfield sites and other urban land has been undertaken within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)</p>	

		and the Brownfield Land Register to understand the level of suitable, deliverable land across the county.	
A member of the public	High quality, now being ruined by the increasing student population in family housing areas.	Policy 16 of the CDP is applied to student related accommodation, alongside other relevant policies, to ensure mixed and balanced communities. Policy 16 will be reviewed when the CDP is reviewed.	
Public Health	<p>We support this priority which has a welcome focus on the quality of local environment as a wider determinant of health, and ensuring good access to local facilities, walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and also to green and blue spaces from people’s homes.</p> <p>We would like to highlight that poor physical housing conditions are a cause of health inequalities and in that context we would welcome your further consideration of the following statement:</p> <p><i>‘Addressing only the physical aspects of housing in County Durham will not in itself improve the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of our communities, or reduce inequalities’</i></p> <p>We appreciate the sentiment of this statement and as outlined in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy that</p>	Recommendation agreed. The wording will be amended to reflect this change.	<p>Paragraph 5.54 has been amended:</p> <p><u>While we recognise that living in good quality housing which is free from hazards will improve the health and wellbeing of residents,</u> addressing only the physical aspects of housing in County Durham will not in itself <u>entirely</u> improve the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of our communities, or reduce inequalities.</p>

	<p>there are multiple factors which influence health and wellbeing, we recommend that it should be noted that living in good quality housing which is free from hazards will improve the health and wellbeing of residents.</p> <p>It is also the case that the other factors outlined with this priority also make a significant contribution to residents health and wellbeing and we recommend that the accessibility of local environment for older and disabled people is included and that the importance of the public realm including, dropped curbs, seating and toilets important.</p>		
<b>Further Comments</b>			
<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Council response</b>	<b>Schedule of changes</b>
Believe	Overall, we agree with the approach to the strategy, we do feel there are some elements that could strengthen the role of social housing providers and we feel there is an opportunity to expand the support to care leavers. We would welcome the continuing collaborative approach to the development of delivery plans including TDPs and early impact assessments for any changes in lettings policy that would impact on	Comments noted, this will be reflected in the delivery plan.	

	our strategic plans, performance and resourcing.		
Durham University	The draft Housing Strategy does not mention the potential negative impacts of the RRB on the supply of housing for students in Durham. We feel it is very important to consider the consequences of this legislation for thousands of members of County Durham’s population over the lifetime of the Housing Strategy. This could be resolved by expanding on the comments on the RRB, and acknowledging the risks for students and student housing supply which are well evidenced a) in parts of the nation where similar changes to legislation have already been implemented (i.e. Scotland), and b) in responses to the Bill from bodies representing private landlords.	The section in the introduction referring to the Renters Reform Bill has been amended.	The second bullet in paragraph 2.6 has been amended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renters Reform Bill, introduced to Parliament (17 May 2023), <del>delivers the government’s 2019 manifesto commitment</del> <u>plans</u> to abolish Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions which will empower renters to challenge poor landlords without fear of losing their home, <u>makes it illegal for landlords and agents to refuse to rent properties to people who receive benefits or have children, creates a national landlord register through the new property portal which will give renters all the information they need to make an informed choice before entering into a tenancy agreement and introduces new grounds for eviction for landlords who genuinely want to sell their properties or move back in. Notice periods will also be reduced where tenants have been irresponsible – for example breaching their tenancy agreement or causing damage to the property. The potential impact of the Bill’s</u></li> </ul>

			<p><u>proposals will be monitored as it progresses towards being enacted.</u></p> <p>Paragraph 2.8 has been deleted:</p> <p><del>The Renters Reform Bill also protects over two million landlords, making it easier for them to recover properties when they need to – so they can sell their property if they want to, move in a close family member, or when tenants willfully do not pay rent. Notice periods will also be reduced where tenants have been irresponsible – for example breaching their tenancy agreement or causing damage to the property.</del></p>
<p>Durham City Trust</p>	<p>Principle 7: We proposed that, wherever possible, new homes should be built to the highest energy efficiency standards rather than just current standards, and that to support active travel there should be higher densities of housing near public transport routes. Both points are now mentioned, albeit in general terms as Principles, but not carried through into Priorities.</p> <p>Extra comment: We advised that mention should be made that large housing estates need associated facilities. This is now reflected in Principle 3 and Priority 5.</p>	<p>The strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards achieving the Council’s Climate Emergency Response Plan.</p>	<p>We will also maximise the opportunities available to address fuel poverty through combining advice schemes and heating improvements and targeting interventions at those most in need, whilst new homes will be designed in line with current energy efficiency standards.</p>

	<p>We responded to Question 33 (How can housing contribute to the Council's Climate Emergency Response Plan?) by suggesting that the strategy should be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Build to net zero standards now, not wait for Government compulsion.</li> <li>· Design for maximum active travel i.e. not the private car using fossil fuels.</li> </ul> <p>These suggestions have not been taken up, so we repeat them now.</p>		
Miller Homes	<p>Miller supports the Council's core objectives and is committed to delivering high quality new communities. In accordance with our earlier comments to Priority 1, a well-planned Garden Village could satisfy all of the core objectives of this priority.</p>	<p>Support and comments noted. Priority 5 will acknowledge potential options for various options for high quality placemaking, where appropriate.</p>	
A member of the public	<p>Why are we forcing more houses into a small area which creates more traffic? Wouldn't that create more pollution in a small area.</p>	<p>The housing strategy seeks to deliver new homes as set out through the CDP. Developments are viewed on a case-by-case basis with regard given to the local area and sustainability and in line with the relevant policies in the CDP.</p>	
A voluntary & community organisation	<p>We submitted comments on the Principles &amp; Priorities Paper in August. The Draft Strategy now out for consultation is very good in many aspects but some of our comments</p>	<p>These comments are addressed in the relevant sections.</p>	

	we made in August have not been incorporated. The current consultation simply asks for comments; the City of Durham Trust's comments are in the preceding sections above.		
A member of the public	Stop talking and get it done	Support noted	
A member of the public	<p>The Executive Summary states:  <b>“Everyone in County Durham should have fair and equal access to safe and secure housing that meets their needs.”</b></p> <p>I completely agree with this statement. There are, however, areas of Durham City where this is not happening because existing communities are losing residential housing, both owner occupied and rented, through a change of use to HMOs. Communities are becoming unbalanced and less cohesive. Housing has become very expensive in these areas as landlords have the finance to buy properties at higher prices so families have to move further out. I recently spoke to two couples who both wanted their children to go to either St Margarets or Nevilles Cross Primary Schools but one had to live in Langley Moor/Meadowfield and one in</p>	<p>The Strategy supports the delivery of homes to enable mixed and balanced communities through the CDP, including policy 16 regarding student housing.</p> <p>The council has introduced Article 4 Directions in four areas in and around Durham City, which means that within the area of these directions, planning permission is required for a change of use to a house of multiple occupation (HMO). These Article 4 Directions, in combination with Parts 2 and 3 of this policy will serve to deliver student accommodation to create inclusive places in line with the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.</p> <p>Policy 16 will be reviewed alongside the rest of the CDP in the future.</p>	



	<p>Bearpark because local housing was out of their reach financially– and one had moved from London which isn't noted for being cheap! My own son who lives in St Bedes Close had his rent increased by 30% last year and his contract changed to annual review because the landlord saw other local houses could command more money from students. Fewer year round residents also impacts on the financial sustainability of shops. (See below 'in addition')</p> <p><b>Action:</b> I would like written into this draft housing strategy a section committing to preservation of existing family accommodation within the city boundary – say within 3 miles of the city centre – and a refusal to allow further change of use to HMOs so 'Everyone in County Durham should have fair and equal access to safe and secure housing that meets their needs.'</p>		
A member of the public	Say more with less words. There is nothing specific enough to waste anyone's time with in this strategy. New homes being good quality and efficient should be a given as per building regs.	Comments noted	

A member of the public	New houses should not be built unless adequate provision is made for schools and GPS prior to the houses being built. All new houses should have to have realistic adequate parking, to ensure access for emergency services is not compromised.	Comments noted. Priority 1 of the Housing Strategy includes the delivery of infrastructure as part of the delivery of the delivery of new homes.	
A member of the public	It needs to be more clear in how these points will be achieved and in what timescale	A short term delivery plan will be submitted as part of the Housing Strategy, with a longer term delivery plan to follow.	
A member of the public	A key theme for the strategy is new build properties but what about the environmental impact especially in towns like Spennymoor where we are seeing the land becoming flooded in areas where trees have been removed and farmland has been used to be develop upon. The wildlife is disbursed resulting in them being exterminated through pest control. There also needs to be the consideration of the existing infrastructure which includes only one secondary school serving the town and the surrounding villages as well as two GP surgeries and two dentist surgeries. No extra investment is made in providing incentives to these private businesses to come into towns where lots of new houses are being built. There are	New developments in County Durham are required to comply with relevant policies in the County Durham Plan. This includes Policy 40- Trees Woodlands and Hedges, Policy 41 Bio Diversity and Geodiversity, Policy 43 Protected Species and Nationally and Locally Protected Sites, which address and issues regarding the impact of development on the natural environment. Consideration is also given to flooding and environmental impact, where appropriate.	
		Priority 1 of the Housing Strategy includes the delivery of infrastructure as part of the delivery of the delivery of new homes.	

	<p>empty properties within towns not always empty due to landlords but due to antisocial behaviour in areas or the design of existing properties which make them less desirable which means that there is then a cycle of landlords from outside of the area purchasing these properties. The new homes often attract people from outside the area and are not affordable for the existing community pushing local residents to consider the low-cost undesirable properties then impacting on health.</p>	<p>As part of the Housing Strategy, we are committed to delivering housing products that are available in a variety of tenures and types and linked to local income. Homes should be affordable for local people with a choice of products that households can afford without falling into debt.</p> <p>Priority 2 of the Housing Strategy will ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to housing that is safe, secure, affordable and meets their needs. We recognise that there will be no type or tenure that fits all and so a range of products, help and support will be implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure affordable housing products are affordable for local people.</li> <li>• Help and support people onto the housing ladder and own their own home through a variety of products;</li> <li>• Help and support people to prevent themselves becoming homeless; and</li> <li>• Enable people to secure and maintain good quality, permanent accommodation.</li> </ul>	
A member of the public	<p>Planning need to look at approvals for student housing in areas where family housing is or should be priority.</p>	<p>The Strategy supports the delivery of homes to enable mixed and balanced communities through the CDP, including policy 16 regarding student housing. Only applications for housing that complies with policy 16, and other relevant policies will be granted. This Policy will be reviewed alongside the rest of the CDP in the future.</p>	
A member of the public	<p>Not enough being built</p>	<p>As part of the CDP, an additional 24,852 new homes are needed in the county between 2016 and 2035 to meet housing need; with a significant proportion of these</p>	

		<p>already committed, either on sites under construction or sites not started with planning permission.</p> <p>The Housing Strategy supports a range and choice of housing which is accessible and well designed to meet future needs and contribute to the sustainability of our communities.</p> <p>The Housing Strategy is committed to supporting the ambitions of the CDP, by ensuring enough new homes are provided that are energy efficient and meet the needs and affordability levels of local residents. This includes through the increase in the supply of affordable homes, such as new council housing, affordable products that are affordable for local people, infrastructure delivery to support new housing and existing communities.</p>	
<p>A member of the public</p>	<p>Consider making applying for housing simpler, the current bidding system is confusing, especially for older people who were used to the housing list system, and often are not good with computers, so online applications are a barrier.</p>	<p>Anyone over 16 who needs help to find affordable housing in County Durham can apply to join the Durham Key Options Housing Register.</p> <p>We have to ensure we meet the legal requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and the Communities and Local Government Allocation of Accommodation: Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities. To do this, we place applicants into one of our scheme's bands according to their assessed housing need. The 4 bands are 1, 2, 3 and 4.</p> <p>An action regarding a future review of Durham Key Options process will be included in the Delivery Plan.</p>	

## Appendix 1

### Economy and Enterprise OSC

22 April 2024

### Overview and Scrutiny Response to the second draft of the County Durham Housing Strategy

#### Background

- (1) The Regeneration, Economy and Growth Service Grouping is undertaking a significant piece of work to develop a new Housing Strategy for County Durham for 2024 which will replace the current strategy agreed in 2019.
- (2) This strategy will outline what Durham County Council (DCC) and partners need to do to ensure that County Durham will be a place of good quality affordable homes that meet the needs of both existing and future residents including older and younger generations.
- (3) It is recognised that good quality housing supports economic growth, helps to improve health and wellbeing for our residents and the educational achievements of our children and creates and maintains communities where people live long and independent lives. Housing therefore links into many areas of DCC's work including, planning, climate change, the economy, health, and children's services, as well as ways to tackle homelessness and poverty in the county.
- (4) The Service Grouping has set out a draft vision, which creates a view of what needs to be achieved in County Durham with seven draft principles and five priorities which could form the basis of this strategy. The principles and priorities are based on local evidence of the County's housing needs, both now and in the future and what the County Durham's housing market looks like.
- (5) DCC undertook a consultation on the Principles and Priorities Paper, the first stage in the preparation of the Housing Strategy during the summer. This was presented as the 'Housing Conversation', asking for the views of residents, partners, housing organisations, landlords and housing developers as part of the consultation process.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Housing Workshop – 10 July 2023**

- (6) As part of this consultation process an Overview and Scrutiny Workshop was arranged in July to which all Overview and Scrutiny members were invited. The workshop provided the opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny members to work in groups, with colleagues from the Regeneration, Economy and Growth Service Grouping, focusing on questions based on the draft Principles and Priorities Paper.
- (7) During the workshop the comments made by members in the respective groups were captured and collated into a formal Overview and Scrutiny response that was shared with Service Grouping at the start of August 2023.
- (8) The Service Grouping fed the comments contained in the formal Overview and Scrutiny into the feedback from the Housing Conversation/consultation with that feedback being used to inform the development of the draft County Durham Housing Strategy. The draft strategy was considered by members at the meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 December 2023.

### **Economy and Enterprise OSC - 18 December 2023**

- (9) At the meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 18 December 2023, members received and considered the draft County Durham Housing Strategy 2024, the Feedback Report for the Housing Conversation and a presentation.
- (10) Both the Feedback Report and the presentation provided a summary of the main points raised by members at the Housing Workshop held in July, with the presentation also providing detail of responses to member's comments.
- (11) The draft County Durham Housing Strategy sets out the strategic direction for Housing activity in County Durham and a vision to provide good quality housing that meets everyone's needs, is affordable for local people and supports the creation of great places to live. The draft strategy contains seven principles, which establish the foundation and rationale underpinning decisions and five priorities for action.
- (12) Consultation on the draft strategy was being undertaken with residents of County Durham and other stakeholders from the 30 October to the 18 December.

- (13) Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny members made a number of comments in relation to the draft County Durham Housing Strategy at the meeting held on the 18 December which were captured and formulated into a formal Overview and Scrutiny response which was then shared with the Service Grouping to inform the second draft of the Strategy. The comments made by members related to the various priorities identified within the strategy together with general comments in relation to the structure of the strategy and the resulting delivery plan. The second draft of the strategy was considered by members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on the 22 April 2024.

### **Economy and Enterprise OSC – 22 April 2024**

- (14) At the meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 22 April 2024, members received and considered the second draft of the County Durham Housing Strategy 2024, a cover report and a presentation.
- (15) The presentation reminded members of Overviews and Scrutiny’s previous involvement in the development of the draft strategy, main messages from the consultation, detail of the responses to the comments made by the members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, detail of the draft delivery plan which identified actions under the various priorities within the plan and next steps. It was highlighted that the draft delivery plan covered the first twelve-month period following the adoption of the strategy and delivery plan by Cabinet and Council in Summer 2024.
- (16) Due to the previous significant involvement of Overview and Scrutiny in the development of the first and second draft of the strategy and the progressing and development of the draft delivery plan, the comments made by members at the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 22 April were few. Members acknowledged that the comments previously made at the 18 December Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee where applicable to the strategy, had informed the development of the second draft of the strategy and in relation to the draft delivery plan, the Service Grouping had progressed its development. This had resulted in a draft delivery plan being developed for the first twelve months following the adoption of the strategy and plan by Cabinet and Council in July 2024. The comments made by members in relation to the draft strategy and the draft delivery plan are attached at appendix 1.

### **Next Steps**

- (17) The draft strategy and delivery plan will be considered by Cabinet and full Council in July 2024.
- (18) It is intended that the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee will include within its work programme for 2024/25 an update on the progress of the actions identified in the adopted delivery plan.



# Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

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

## Section One: Description and Screening

<b>Service/Team or Section</b>	Spatial Policy
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Mike Allum
<b>Title</b>	Housing Strategy
<b>MTFP Reference (if relevant)</b>	
<b>Cabinet Date (if relevant)</b>	
<b>Start Date</b>	July 2023
<b>Review Date</b>	May 2024

## Subject of the Impact Assessment

<p>Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):</p>
<p>The County Durham Housing Strategy sets out the strategic direction for housing activity in County Durham and a vision to provide good quality housing that meets everyone’s needs, is affordable for local people and supports the creation of great places to live. Its purpose is to set the context as to how we will meet the housing challenges we face.</p> <p>The strategy recognises the importance of placemaking and how housing needs to complement and integrate with the spaces around it so that people feel part of a community and can easily access the services and amenities they need. Providing the right infrastructure is of vital importance to good placemaking. We must increase the delivery of new homes, including secure, affordable housing and new council owned housing.</p> <p>Everyone in County Durham should have fair and equal access to safe and secure housing that meets their needs. This includes addressing the specific needs of groups including children in care, children leaving care, people with disabilities, those with complex health issues and older people.</p>

We will help and support people to prevent them becoming homeless and enable them to secure and maintain, and sustain living in, good quality, permanent accommodation, with support in place where it is needed. We must also ensure that a comprehensive range of supported and specialist housing is available for those who need it.

We are committed to providing high quality homes and will work with local communities and put them at the heart of the decision-making process in a way that meets their needs and priorities. We will also strive to drive up standards in the private rented sector.

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

Anyone who lives in, studies in, works in, visits, or has an interest in living in County Durham may be interested in the Housing Strategy. This includes the general public, council staff, Elected Members, landlords, registered providers, housing developers and landowners, various partners, stakeholders from various sectors and interest groups or communities, Area Action Partnerships, Town/Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Forums and statutory consultees / prescribed bodies as defined by the Government.

## Screening

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

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

Sex (gender)	N	Y
Sexual orientation	N	Y
Transgender	N	Y

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

Negative impact is not anticipated as the Housing Strategy sets out a framework for a Strategy that will be for the whole County .

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

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

The Housing Strategy will be a strategy for County Durham that will be developed and delivered in partnership across the county and for the benefit of all of our residents. We will make use of the County Durham Partnership and other relevant groups in developing and delivering the Strategy.

The Housing Strategy will promote community consultation and engagement as part of the delivery of its priorities. It will also jointly develop local solutions with partners, residents and relevant agencies, which will foster good relations between people from different groups.

There are potential positive impacts across the protected characteristics especially in terms of age (younger and older people), disability, race/ethnicity (GRT communities) and sex (both male and female). Engagement and assessment of equality impact is very much locality specific depending on the scale of development.

## Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

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

There is national, regional and local evidence available which shows that people with certain protected characteristics can face multiple barriers in employment, health, access to services and information, participation in decision making and in

consultation. Census 2021, data available on the ONS platform, data from Durham Insights, evidence from the Children and Young People's services Annual Reports, from the DfE, and a report by the Albert Kennedy Trust have been used in section two of this assessment.

This also links to the [Durham Insight](#) portal and uses data from the Office for National Statistics and other Government sources.

<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s104486/Outcomes%20Report%20Education.pdf>

<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s120686/OSC%20-%20outcomes%20report.pdf>

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2389/2011-Census>

In addition Evidence has been collected as part of a Housing Conversation and Strategy Development: A broad conversation with stakeholders and partners which has been used to develop a draft strategy.

### **Consultation update**

**The Principles and Priorities Paper was the first stage in the preparation of the Housing Strategy. As part of the County Durham Housing Conversation, the council sought views on a draft vision, seven principles and five priorities.**

**The Housing Conversation took place between the 26 June 2023 and the 18 August 2023. The Housing Conversation included: Presentations to 13 Area Action Partnerships.**

Attendance at 9 County Durham Partnership groups including the County Durham Together Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Place, Health and Communities Board.

A workshop for all Members of Scrutiny.

Presentations to the County Durham Association of Local Councils.

A Rural Housing Event.

Online consultation events.

The Housing Conversation was also supported by a social media and communications campaign which included:

A dedicated webpage, which had 1,039 pages views and 789 unique page views during the Housing Conversation.

A Facebook advert, which started on the 28 July and had a total reach of 22,248 and an engagement of 953 (859 link clicks)

6 Facebook posts, which had a total reach of 16,924 people and an engagement of 166 (51 link clicks).

Facebook and Instagram Stories with a total reach of 8,099 and 3,471 respectively.

22 Tweets on Twitter with a total of 23,102 impressions and a total engagement of 205 (70 link clicks).

The Housing Conversation was supported by three specialist surveys. A survey for residents, a survey for young people and a survey for industry. The following numbers of surveys were returned as part of the Housing Conversation:

Residents: 368.

Young people: 257.

Industry: 15.

The Housing Strategy draft consultation was the second stage of consultation for the Housing Strategy. This Draft was then consulted on between 30<sup>th</sup> October and the 18<sup>th</sup> of August.

The consultation included:

emailing consultees who stated they wished to be kept informed of the next stage of the Housing Strategy consultation from the Principles and Priorities consultation publicising via the council's online consultation portal;

making the draft Housing Strategy available on the council's website;

presentations to 8 AAP's,

engagement with and presentations to 24 Partnerships

Presentation to Members of Scrutiny

2 Online events

Youth Council presentation

Meetings and workshop with Registered Providers

Meetings and workshop with Durham University

Workshop with Public Health

using the council's corporate notifications, communications and social media outlets; and press releases.

The council considered all feedback and made updates, changes and additions where necessary, these included:

The development of a 6-12 month delivery plan to set out what the outcomes and actions for the next 12 months would be to ensure delivery of the Principles and Priorities

Priority 1- Further information giving recognition students and the unique function of student accommodation as part of the private rented sector

Additional consideration and explicit reference to families who are pregnant and children, regarding groups with specific needs and as groups that are vulnerable to homelessness

Priority 2- Specific reference to affordable rent regarding everyone being able to afford their own home

Priority 3- further information regarding damp and mould to improve the quality of housing stock

Priority 4 – pregnant women and with babies specifically referenced regarding adopting a Housing First Approach to prioritise getting people quickly into stable homes.

## Screening Summary

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

## Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:	Date:
Service equality representative sign off: M Gallagher, E&D Team Leader	Date:

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

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

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

## Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

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

Protected Characteristic: <b>Age</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Record of evidence to support or explain your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Principle 3: Housing will be the cornerstone of communities and should support improved health community safety, educational attainment, and the local economy. This will have a positive impact on young people who will benefit from housing being built with regard to outdoor space and within reach of good schools.</p> <p>Principle 5 All new homes should be accessible, this will have appositive impact on groups including older persons who are more likely to need homes that are accessible as their mobility may decrease and adaptations may be needed in their homes. This principle recognises the importance of supporting people to live independently and remain in their homes for as long as they wish, including older people.</p> <p>Priority 1: Increase the delivery of new homes, including secure, affordable</p>	<p>Census Data (2021) estimates that the population of County Durham now stands at 522,100. ONS (2020) predicts that the county's population will continue to grow over the coming years, increasing by <b>3.7%</b> by 2028 and by <b>6.6%</b> overall by 2043.</p> <p>The 2020 mid-year population estimates for County Durham shows that the population of those 65+ is 20.9%, and 41.5% for those 50+, this is higher than the Northeast percentage of 20.1% and 40.5% and the percentage of the population in England 65+ of 18.5% and 37.8%. The mid-year population estimates for County Durham shows that the population of those aged 18-24 years olds is 9.4%. This higher than the Northeast percentage of 8.9% and England percentage of 8.3%.</p> <p>The Housing Conversation involved engagement with the County Durham community through surveys, including a</p>	<p>Annual review of the Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan</p>

<p>housing to meet housing needs together with the infrastructure required. This will have a positive impact on younger people who are more likely to be first time buyers in need of affordable housing products. Housing can also shape educational outcomes for children.</p> <p>Priority 1 will have a positive impact on younger people as it includes delivery of student accommodation. Young people are more likely to use student accommodation.</p> <p>Priority 1 will have a positive impact on older people as it includes delivering homes to meet the needs of older people.</p> <p>Priority 4: Ensure a comprehensive range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, disabled people and children and young people, including specialist accommodation and support. This will have a positive impact on age for older people and young people in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by promoting and sustaining independent living by planning for the provision of specialist and supported housing, such as care homes, children’s homes and supported living housing products,</li> <li>• ensure the provisions of adaptations together with flexible,</li> </ul>	<p>young person’s survey, events with AAP’s , Youth Parliament. The Conversation yielded 257 Young persons surveys and 368 general surveys of which the majority of respondents were aged 50+.</p> <p>19% of young people said they did not feel safe in the area they lived in.</p> <p>Based on this consultation feedback the Housing Strategy has established that priorities include creating safer living environments through careful neighbourhood design, homes that are accessible and housing products that meet the needs of older people and specialist products to meet the needs of older people and children and young people.</p>	
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<p>personalised care and support to enable people to live independently for as long as possible as their care needs develop with age.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a Needs Led Accommodation Review (NLAR) to consider longer term specialist accommodation needs – the NLAR is considering the longer term needs of specific groups including children and young people, older people, people with mental health or learning difficulties and homelessness</li> <li>• Implement policies of the CDP including Require 100% of specialist housing for older people will meet M4(2) accessible and adaptable standards, and a minimum of 25% of accommodation to meet M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings); and</li> <li>• Require new development to provide an attractive range of housing options for older people with a minimum of 10% of dwellings to be of a design and type that will increase the housing options of older people, such as bungalows.</li> </ul>		
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<p>Priority 5: Ensure high quality placemaking, creating safe, accessible, prosperous and sustainable places to live. This priority is likely to have appositve impact on older and young people as older people are more likely to feel unsafe or vulnerable whilst outside their homes and young people are more likely to be out in their communities playing or socialising in their local area such as parks or outdoor communal areas.</p> <p>Priority 1- Further information giving recognition students and the unique function of student accommodation as part of the private rented sector. This will have a positive impact on younger people who make up the majority of the student population.</p> <p>Priority 1- Additional consideration and explicit reference to families who are pregnant and children, regarding groups with specific needs and as groups that are vulnerable to homelessness. This is likely to have appositve impact on young people and children who make up this group and are identified as a vulnerable group with specific need. This means that their specific needs and vulnerabilities will be identified and addressed.</p> <p>Priority 2- Specific reference to affordable rent regarding everyone being able to afford their own home will be likely to have a positive impact on</p>	<p>The student population makes up a large proportion of the private rented sector in the Durham City and wider area. The consultation involved consultation with Durham University and Durham Students Union. It was agreed that student accommodation is a unique function of the Private Rented Sector and so required specific action to deliver principles and priorities set out.</p> <p>Consultation with Public Health found that families who are pregnant and children, regarding groups have specific needs and as groups that are vulnerable to homelessness.</p>	
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<p>young people who may be more likely to rent as getting on to the property ladder is more difficult.</p> <p>Priority 3- further information regarding damp and mould to improve the quality of housing stock. This will be likely to have a positive impact on younger age groups and older persons who are more likely to be more seriously impacted by respiratory issues and more likely to be vulnerable to damp and mould.</p>	<p>Consultation with Registered Providers, Public Health found that Housing is particularly important in ensuring a healthy start in life and is a key factor causing health inequalities. Some groups are more vulnerable to these housing conditions, such as children and young people, the elderly or people with pre-existing illness, are at a greater risk of ill health associated with cold or damp homes.</p> <p>Some groups of people are more likely to live in poor quality cold and damp housing conditions, including households with an older person living in them, households with a lone parent, households with children, low-income households and households with people from minority ethnic backgrounds</p>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Disability</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Principle 5: All new homes should be accessible, tenure blind and provide flexible living for different stages in a person's life, always aiming to allow people to be independent, including remaining in their home for</p>	<p>County Durham has a higher percentage of people with long term health issues and disabled people than the Northeast average, representing nearly a quarter of the overall population.</p>	<p>Annual review of the Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan</p>

<p>as long as they desire. This will have appositve impact on people with disabilities as they will benefit from the delivery of homes that are accessible and flexible and homes that allow people with disabilities to live independently and remain in their home for as long as they desire.</p> <p>Priority 4: Ensure a comprehensive range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, disabled people and children and young people, including specialist accommodation and support. This will have a positive impact on age for older people and young people in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by promoting and sustaining independent living by planning for the provision of specialist and supported housing, such as care homes, children’s homes and supported living housing products, ensure the provisions of adaptations together with flexible,</li> <li>• personalised care and support to enable people to live independently for as long as possible as their care needs develop with age.</li> <li>• Undertake a Needs Led Accommodation Review (NLAR) to consider longer term specialist</li> </ul>	<p>County Durham has a percentage of working age (16-64) people classed as having a limiting long-term illness or disability (LLTI) of 23.6%. This is higher than the overall figures for the North East, at 21.6%, and England and Wales, at 17.9%. (ONS 2011 Census (NOMIS extract))</p> <p>The ONS 2022-09 reported the County Durham disabled employment rate is 45.7% compared to the general employment rate for County Durham of 72.4%.</p> <p>The Housing Conversation involved engagement with the County Durham community through surveys, events with AAP’s and Working groups. 22% of respondents to the general survey identified as disabled, 11% of respondents for the young peoples survey identified as disable.</p> <p>Based on this consultation feedback the Housing Strategy has established that one of the concerns of residents is that their homes will meet their health needs in the future. 48% of those with a disability disagreed that their home allowed them to live independently.</p> <p>This is reflected through: Principle 5: All new homes should be accessible, tenure blind and provide flexible living for different stages in a person’s life, always aiming to allow people to be independent, including</p>	
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<p>accommodation needs – the NLAR is considering the longer term needs of specific groups including children and young people, older people, people with mental health or learning difficulties and homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement policies of the CDP including Require 100% of specialist housing for older people will meet M4(2) accessible and adaptable standards, and a minimum of 25% of accommodation to meet M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings); and</li> <li>• Require new development to provide an attractive range of housing options for older people with a minimum of 10% of dwellings to be of a design and type that will increase the housing options of older people, such as bungalows.</li> </ul> <p>Priority 5: Ensure high quality placemaking, creating safe, accessible, prosperous and sustainable places to live.</p> <p>This priority is likely to have apposite impact on older and young people as older people are more likely to feel unsafe or vulnerable whilst outside their homes and young people are more likely to be out in their</p>	<p>remaining in their home for as long as they desire</p> <p>Priority 2: Ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe and secure housing that support health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Priority 4: Ensure a comprehensive range of housing options for older and vulnerable people, disabled people and children and young people, including specialist accommodation and support.</p>	
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communities playing or socialising in their local area such as parks or outdoor communal areas.		
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
N/A		

Protected Characteristic: <b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Race (ethnicity)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
The Housing Strategy principles will have a positive impact on the GRT community through: Principle 2: Everyone should have access to a home that is affordable to them, which includes that we will also seek to make sure there is sufficient housing for everyone, including Gypsy and Roma Travellers.	County Durham has the second highest number of social pitches for the GRT community of all English authorities and over a third of all GRT pitches in the North East.	Annual review of the Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan

<p>The Housing Strategy priorities will have a positive impact on ethnic minorities through:</p> <p>Priority 3 Ensure high quality, energy efficient homes and effective landlord services. This includes; Inspect properties as part of ongoing projects such as the Supported Housing Improvement Programme, Asylum Widening Dispersal Scheme and Homes for Ukraine, to ensure these properties offer safe accommodation.</p> <p>Priority 3- further information regarding damp and mould to improve the quality of housing stock will be likely to have a positive impact on this protected characteristic who are more likely to live in poor quality housing.</p>	<p>The Housing Solutions Team are currently working on projects such as: Supported Housing Improvement Programme, Asylum Widening Dispersal Scheme and Homes for Ukraine, to support relevant groups.</p> <p>Consultation with Registered Providers, Public Health found that Housing is particularly important in ensuring a healthy start in life and is a key factor causing health inequalities.</p> <p>Some groups of people are more likely to live in poor quality cold and damp housing conditions, including households with an older person living in them, households with a lone parent, households with children, low-income households and households with people from minority ethnic backgrounds</p>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Religion or belief</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
N/A		

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Protected Characteristic: <b>Sex (gender)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>The Housing Strategy has a range of principles and priorities that will have a specifically positive impact on female. These include:</p> <p>Principle 1: Everyone has a right to a warm, safe and decent home. Homes should be well maintained, free of damp and mould. People should feel safe in their homes from domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour. This will have appositive impact on females who are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>Priority 5: Ensure high quality placemaking, creating safe, accessible, prosperous and sustainable places to live. This includes creating safer living environments, promoting well designed places.</p> <p>This will have a positive impact on females who are more likely to feel vulnerable when out in public, particularly when it is dark.</p> <p>The Housing Strategy has a range of principles and priorities that will have a specifically positive impact on males. These include: Principle 2: Everyone should have access to a home that</p>	<p>The ONS 2022-09 reports that females make up 50.8% of the County's population. In 2022-09 the ONS reported that the female claimant count is lower than males, however females in County Durham have a lower rate of economic activity, lower employment rate and rate of fulltime employment than men. Females have a higher rate of part-time employment than men.</p>	<p>Annual review of the Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan</p>



<p>is affordable to them, which includes prevent homelessness.</p> <p>Priority 2: Ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, safe and secure housing that support health and wellbeing. This includes focusing on homelessness prevention. Single males are more likely to present as homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.</p> <p>Priority 1- Additional consideration and explicit reference to families who are pregnant and children, regarding groups with specific needs and as groups that are vulnerable to homelessness. This is likely to have appositive impact on women who are pregnant and women are more likely to be part of families with and children who make up this group and are identified as a vulnerable group with specific need. This means that their specific needs and vulnerabilities will be identified and addressed.</p> <p>Priority 4 – pregnant women and with babies specifically referenced regarding adopting a Housing First Approach to prioritise getting people quickly into stable homes.</p> <p>Priority 3- further information regarding damp and mould to improve the quality of housing stock will be likely to have a positive impact on this protected characteristic</p>	<p>Consultation with Public Health found that families who are pregnant and children, regarding groups have specific needs and as groups that are vulnerable to homelessness.</p> <p>Consultation with Registered Providers, Public Health found that Housing is particularly important in ensuring a healthy start in life and is a key factor causing health inequalities.</p> <p>Some groups of people are more likely to live in poor quality cold and damp housing conditions, including households with an older person living in them, households with a lone parent, households with <u>children, low-income</u></p>	
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who are more likely to live in poor quality housing.	<u>households and households with people from minority ethnic backgrounds</u>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Sexual orientation</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
N/A		

Protected Characteristic: <b>Transgender</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
N/A		

## Section Three: Conclusion and Review

### Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your findings stating the main impacts, both positive and negative, across the protected characteristics.
<p>The Housing Strategy is intended to support everyone in the County but there is evidence that certain groups such as older persons, young people, disabled persons, ethnic minority groups, women and cohorts of males may be more positively impacted than other groups.</p> <p>This Strategy identifies the key housing opportunities and challenges facing County Durham in the next five years. Our vision is:  <b>'By 2035 County Durham will be a place that has good quality homes that meet the needs of existing and future residents that they can afford. The</b></p>

**provision and quality of housing will support economic growth, contribute to improved health, community safety and create and maintain sustainable, mixed and balanced communities. People will live long and independent lives within connected and safer communities.'**

The Housing Strategy provides the strategic framework to deliver our housing priorities and supports the delivery of the Council Plan and the County Durham Vision.

- The Council Plan sets out the council's vision and overall priorities and programme of work for the period 2019-2035.
- The County Durham Vision 2035, which was developed together with partner organisations and the public, sets out what we would want the county to look like in 15 years' time. This vision is structured around three ambitions which are:
  - More and better jobs;
  - People live long and independent lives; and
  - Connected communities.

The Housing Strategy will align with a number of other strategies and plans to ensure that communities are safer, healthier and more prosperous. These include the Inclusive Economic Strategy, the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Growing Up in County Durham Strategy and the principles of the Anti-Social Behaviour pledge in supporting safe neighbourhoods.

To ensure that the strategy benefits people across the county

There are inequalities across our county, for example in access to housing, suitable housing products, health, education, and infrastructure. This Strategy will be based on the following principles to address this.

Principle 1: Everyone has a right to a warm, safe and decent home.

Principle 2: Everyone should have access to a home that is affordable to them.

Principle 3: Housing is the cornerstone of communities and should support improved health, community safety, educational attainment, and the local economy.

Principle 4: The strategy will be for the county, not the council, and will promote local solutions underpinned by community engagement.

Principle 5: All new homes should be accessible, tenure blind and provide flexible living for different stages in a person's life, always aiming to allow people to be independent, including remaining in their home for as long as they desire.

Principle 6: Existing and new communities should be physically, digitally, culturally and economically connected to support the creation of sustainable, safe, mixed and balanced communities, including bringing empty homes back into use.

Principle 7: The strategy will support energy efficiency and carbon reduction in existing and new housing and contribute towards the council's Climate Emergency Response Plan

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

The Housing Strategy vision for County Durham is that: 'By 2035 County Durham will be a place that has good quality homes that meet the needs of existing and future residents that they can afford. The provision and quality of housing will support economic growth, contribute to improved health, community safety and create and maintain sustainable, mixed and balanced communities. People will live long and independent lives within connected and safer communities.'

We will achieve this vision by working together with our partners and engagement with our communities. The Housing Strategy will be a strategy for County Durham that will be developed and delivered in partnership across the county and for the benefit of all of our residents. We will make use of the County Durham Partnership and other relevant groups in developing and delivering the Strategy.

The Housing Strategy will promote community consultation and engagement as part of the delivery of its priorities. It will also jointly develop local solutions with partners, residents and relevant agencies.

The Housing Strategy recognises the diversity of communities across County Durham and the differing issues and opportunities they face. It has a role to coordinate activity of the council, its partners and wider investment opportunities to support sustainable, safe, mixed, and balanced and connected communities.

The next steps for the Housing Strategy will be that delegated authority will be sought for the approval of the Draft Strategy and to consult on the Draft Strategy. This round of, consultation will be undertaken on the document between the 30 October 2023 to 18 December 2023.

The consultation will be undertaken with residents of County Durham and other stakeholders, including those from protected characteristic groups, with a potential interest in the content of the document. As part of the consultation the council will use a wide range of approaches including:

Presentations / information dissemination to Area Action Partnerships.

Presentations to the County Durham Partnership groups. Meetings with protected characteristic groups.

Online consultation events.

A social media and communications campaign; and

Briefing for elected members.

The consultation will seek comments on the Draft Housing Strategy. The Draft Strategy will then be modified as necessary and presented to Cabinet and Full Council for Adoption in Spring 2024.

## Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?
Take the Housing Strategy to full cabinet	DCC	Short-Term	
Review the Housing Strategy Delivery Plan	DCC	Medium-term	

## Review

Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken? (Y/N)	Y
When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	Y

## Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:	Date:
Service equality representative sign off: M Gallagher, E&D Team Leader	Date:

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

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## Foreword

We believe that housing is more than just bricks and mortar. It is at the heart of families, communities and our local economy. Whether renting or buying, there is clear evidence that having access to good quality, suitable, secure and well-maintained housing has a profound impact on health and wellbeing and, therefore, quality of life. A sufficient supply of housing, including affordable housing, is a key component of achieving inclusive economic growth, and the role it plays in supporting good health and wellbeing and supporting people into work is recognised by Public Health England<sup>1</sup>.

For many years, the number of new affordable houses built in County Durham has fallen below the number needed, whilst the quality of much of our older stock needs significant investment to bring it up to modern standards.

## Foreword

We believe that housing is more than just bricks and mortar. It is at the heart of families, communities and our local economy. Whether renting or buying, there is clear evidence that having access to good quality, suitable, secure and well-maintained housing has a profound impact on health and wellbeing and, therefore, quality of life. A sufficient supply of housing, including affordable housing, is a key component of achieving inclusive economic growth, and the role it plays in supporting good health and wellbeing and supporting people into work is recognised by Public Health England<sup>2</sup>.

For many years, the number of new affordable houses built in County Durham has fallen below the number needed, whilst the quality of much of our older stock needs significant investment to bring it up to modern standards. Recent changes to national planning guidance will also require the council to deliver significantly more houses to meet the Government's stated target of delivering 1.5 million houses by the end of the current parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Health England was subsequently replaced by UK Health Security Agency and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Strategy identifies the key housing opportunities and challenges facing County Durham in the next five years. Our vision is:  
**‘By 2035 County Durham will be a place that has good quality houses that meet the needs of existing and future residents that they can afford. The provision and quality of housing will support economic growth, contribute to improved health, community safety and create and maintain sustainable, mixed and balanced communities. People will live long and independent lives within connected and safer communities.’**
- 1.2. The Housing Strategy provides the strategic framework to deliver our housing priorities and supports the delivery of the Council Plan and the County Durham Vision.

- 2.5 The government has set a national target for 300,000 new houses to be built each year to tackle the acute shortage of housing across the country. To help meet this target it has also introduced a new, larger, £11.5bn Affordable Homes Programme between 2021-2026 to deliver 180,000 affordable new properties. The government identifies the provision of affordable housing as key to ending the housing crisis, tackle homelessness and provide aspiring homeowners with a step onto the housing ladder.
- 2.6 The government has recently passed new legislation and has published white papers and reports that will impact the housing market. The Housing Strategy will be delivered in the context of the following:
- **Social Housing Act 2023** – forms a new era of regulation for the social housing sector and will enact the reforms outlines in the Social Housing White Paper, which are aimed at improving the regulation of social housing, strengthening tenants’ rights, and ensuring better quality and safer homes for residents. This will be done through stronger powers for the Regulator of Social Housing to carry out inspections, additional Housing

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- 1.2. The Housing Strategy provides the strategic framework to deliver our housing priorities and supports the delivery of the Council Plan and the County Durham Vision. It will also support the Government’s ambitions for increased housing delivery.

- 2.5 The previous Conservative government set a national target for 300,000 new houses to be built each year to tackle the acute shortage of housing across the country. The new Labour Government have similarly set an ambitious target of 1.5 million more homes by the end of the parliament.
- 2.6 The previous government had recently passed new legislation and has published white papers and reports that will impact the housing market the new government have identified a number of pieces of legislation in their first King’s Speech that will have an impact on housing. The Housing Strategy will therefore be delivered in the context of the following:
- **Social Housing Act 2023** – passed by the previous Government, it will enact the reforms outlines in the Social Housing White Paper, which are aimed at improving the regulation of social housing, strengthening tenants’ rights, and ensuring better quality and safer homes for residents. This will be done through stronger powers for the Regulator of Social Housing to carry out inspections, additional Housing

<p>Ombudsman powers to publish landlord best practice, ‘Awaab’s Law’ which sets strict time limits for social landlords to address hazards such as damp and mould, new qualification requirements for registered providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Renters Reform Bill</b> – introduced to Parliament in May 2023 but halted from passing into law by the calling of the general election. It planned to abolish Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions (following reforms to the court system) which would have empowered renters to challenge poor landlords without fear of losing their home. A number of other proposals were included such as making it illegal for landlords and agents to have blanket bans on renting properties to people who receive benefits or have children, a new national landlord register, provisions for landlords to regain possession in some prescribed circumstances and a requirement for all landlords to join a new Ombudsman scheme and a Decent Homes standard. The Conservative Government placed a great deal of importance on this Bill and it is possible that its proposals may return under a new Government.</li> <li>• <b>Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill</b> – sets out a policy regime to tackle geographical disparities across the UK based on the government setting medium term missions, with a 2030 timeframe, to boost productivity and living standards, spread opportunities and improve opportunities, restore a sense of community and local pride and belonging and empower local leaders and communities. Housing is a key component of this. The Levelling Up paper seeks to work with places in a more joined up way to tackle housing and regeneration issues.</li> <li>• <b>Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-2028</b> – has been developed collaboratively with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The strategy sets out how Homes England will play its part in delivering the government’s Levelling up and housing agendas. Its mission is to “drive regeneration and</li> </ul>	<p>Ombudsman powers to publish landlord best practice, ‘Awaab’s Law’ which sets strict time limits for social landlords to address hazards such as damp and mould and new qualification requirements for registered providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Revised National Planning Policy Framework December 2024</b> – Following consultation earlier in the year the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024. There are many changes which will impact on the planning functions of the council but the key changes seek to deliver the Government’s wider objectives primarily relating to significantly increasing housing delivery and achieving economic growth including by giving all councils in England new, mandatory housing targets. The new annual figure of 2011 houses per year for County Durham is a 54% increase on the current County Durham figure of 1308. This will a major impact on the need for supporting infrastructure and the ability of the development industry to deliver. These significant changes will likely necessitate an early review of the County Durham Plan.</li> <li>• <b>Renters Rights Bill/Renters Reform Bill</b> – the Renters Reform Bill was introduced to Parliament in May 2023 but halted from passing into law by the calling of the general election. It planned, amongst other things, to abolish Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions (following reforms to the court system) which would have empowered renters to challenge poor landlords without fear of losing their home. Following the General Election the King’s Speech announced that the new Labour Government would be bringing forward the Renters’ Rights Bill, which was subsequently published in September 2024. Although the Renters’ Rights Bill is very similar to the Renters (Reform) Bill, there are some significant differences, although the abolition of Section 21 remains.</li> </ul>
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housing delivery to create high-quality houses and thriving places. This will support greater social justice, the levelling up of communities across England and the creation of places people are proud to call home". The strategy has five interconnected objectives to deliver on the mission: create vibrant and successful places, build a housing and regeneration sector that works for everyone, enable sustainable houses and places, promote creation of high-quality houses in well-designed places, facilitate the creation of homes people need.

2.7 Homes England pledge to use the strategy to work closely with local authorities, registered providers, government departments and the private sector as partners to deliver change, and intervene directly, exercising the use of their statutory powers to champion both national and local interests.

- Key additions include:
  - Ban on encouraging or inviting rental bidding, or accepting higher rent;
  - Requirement for advertising to state proposed rent;
  - Remedying hazards (Awaab's Law); and
  - Additional offences for Rent Repayment Orders.
- Key omissions include:
- No minimum 6 month tenancy;
- No new Mandatory Ground 8A for serious repeated rent arrears; and
- No Lord Chancellor's assessment before implementation of s21 abolition.
- **Levelling Up and Regeneration Act** – enacted in 2023 and sets out a policy regime to tackle geographical disparities across the UK based on the government setting medium term missions, with a 2030 timeframe, to boost productivity and living standards, spread opportunities and improve opportunities, restore a sense of community and local pride and belonging and empower local leaders and communities. Housing is a key component of the provisions of the Act which aims to deliver a more joined up way to tackle housing and regeneration issues.
- **Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-2028** – was developed jointly by Homes England and the previous Conservative Government. The strategy set out how Homes England will play its part in delivering the previous government's levelling up and housing agendas. Its mission was to "drive regeneration and housing delivery to create high-quality houses and thriving places. This will support greater social justice, the levelling up of communities across England and the creation of places people are proud to call home". The strategy has five interconnected objectives to deliver on the

	<p>mission: create vibrant and successful places, build a housing and regeneration sector that works for everyone, enable sustainable houses and places, promote creation of high-quality houses in well-designed places, facilitate the creation of homes people need.</p> <p>2.7 We will monitor all of the announcements and legislation of the new Government and reflect them in the actions of the Delivery Plan as part of its regular updates.</p>
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Dwelling Stock

1.1. In County Durham 62.5% of properties are owner-occupied, 20% are social rented and 17.1% are private rented. Most dwellings in the county are terraced houses, which at 36% of the stock, is higher than for the Northeast region and for England. The mix of dwelling types in the county is changing with the proportion of bungalows in the county rising to 14%, higher than the region and England percentages. Detached dwellings have risen to 15%, again above the Northeast region of 12%. Of all dwellings, 5.9% have one bedroom/bedsit, 35.2% have two bedrooms, 44.9% have three bedrooms and 16.7% have four or more bedrooms.

Dwelling Stock

1.2. In County Durham 62.5% of properties are owner-occupied, 20% are social rented and 17.1% are private rented. Most dwellings in the county are terraced houses, which at 36% of the stock, is higher than for the Northeast region and for England. The mix of dwelling types in the county is changing with the proportion of bungalows in the county rising to 14%, higher than the region and England percentages. Detached dwellings have risen to 15%, again above the Northeast region of 12%. Of all dwellings, 5.9% have one bedroom/bedsit, 35.2% have two bedrooms, 44.9% have three bedrooms and 16.7% have four or more bedrooms.

County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy

1.3. The County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy sets a clear, long-term vision for the area’s economy up to 2035, with an overarching aim to create more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy. It seeks to overcome barriers in order to transform levels of growth and harness the county’s potential. It recognises that housing is a major enabler to achieving economic growth and better social outcomes for our communities. By contributing to a high quality of place and an attractive housing stock and supporting jobs, particularly in the construction sector, the strategy will be important in the delivery of the IES’s objectives.

3.6. On 28 December 2022 the Government announced a devolution deal with the seven councils across the North East, including Durham.

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5.8. Delivering affordable housing by:

- Delivering 500 council houses as part of the Council Housing Delivery Programme. This includes both new build schemes and a programme of targeted acquisitions. The original intention was to deliver these 500 houses by 2026, however, the impact of covid 19 and wider economic conditions including inflationary pressures and

5.8 Delivering affordable housing by:

- Delivering 500 new build council houses and associated infrastructure as part of the Council House Delivery Programme. The new build properties will be complemented by a programme of targeted acquisitions.

<p>rising interest rates have presented delivery challenges for the programme. As a result, we are intending to roll the programme forward commencing from the approval of the cabinet report in July 2023 with a six-year delivery plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting registered providers to continue to play a significant role in the delivery of affordable housing products in County Durham through their investment plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The original intention was to deliver these 500 houses by 2026, however, the impact of covid 19 and wider economic conditions including inflationary pressures and rising interest rates have presented delivery challenges for the programme. As a result, we are rolling the programme forward commencing from the approval of the cabinet report in July 2023 with a six-year delivery plan to 2029. In reality, if building council houses proves a viable proposition, it is likely that the programme will extend beyond 2029 and the number of new houses built will exceed 500.</li> <li>• Supporting registered providers to continue to play a significant role in the delivery of affordable housing products in County Durham through their investment plans.</li> </ul>
	<p>5.35. Well managed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) form an important part of the private rented sector, often providing cheaper accommodation for people whose housing options are limited. Whilst larger HMOs require planning approval, smaller ones (those with fewer than six occupants) are classed as permitted development and therefore, do not require the Council’s approval. Evidence from Council tax records and HMO Licences show that most HMOs in the County are located in Durham City and are primarily occupied by students however, HMOs are beginning to appear elsewhere in the County. Most HMOs are well managed however, some can cause issues for neighbouring residents and local communities. In those cases, the council can use its licensing and other powers to ensure landlords are meeting their obligations relating to the management of the property and the wellbeing of their tenants. The County Durham Plan also includes a policy to manage the proliferation of HMOs to maintain mixed and balances communities. This is complemented by a number of Article 4 Directions which require landlords proposing smaller HMOs to apply for planning permission.</p>

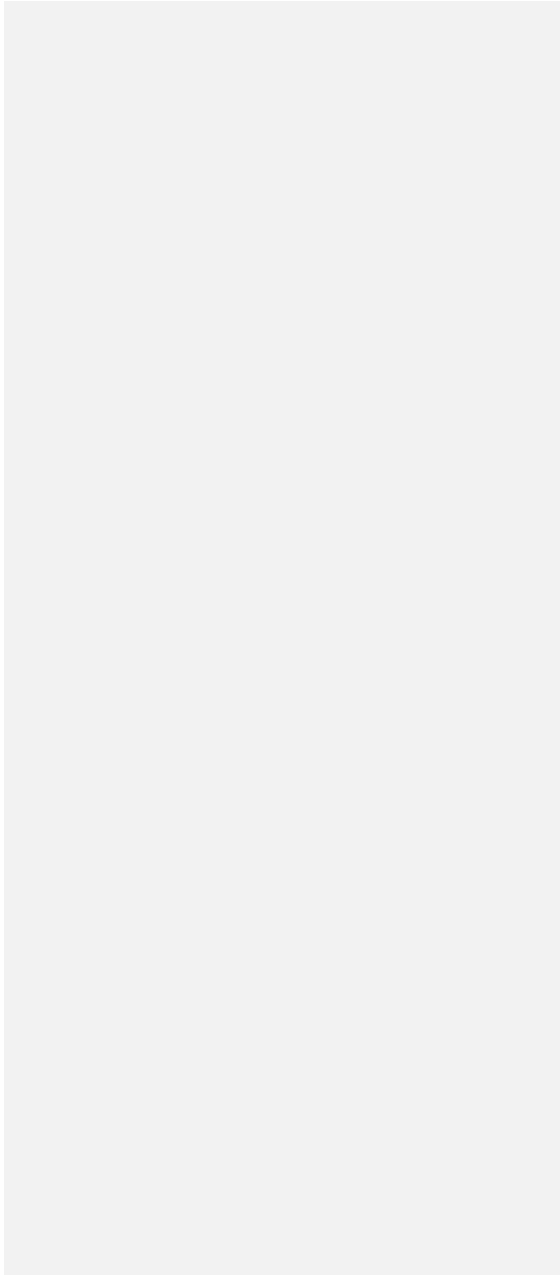
	<p>5.44. In preparation for the next iteration of the County Durham Plan we will assess the effectiveness of the approach to HMOs set out in the current Plan, and will undertake a county wide public engagement exercise, to inform a future review and inform residents of what actions are available to local authorities to manage the numbers of HMOs in specific localities. We will therefore also explore the availability of evidence relating to the location of HMOs and the potential need for further Article 4 Directions relating to smaller HMOs outside of Durham City.</p>
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County Durham Housing Strategy

**Delivery Plan ~~2024~~2025 - ~~2025~~2026**



PRIORITY 1: INCREASE THE DELIVERY OF NEW HOUSES, INCLUDING SECURE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO MEET HOUSING NEEDS TOGETHER WITH THE INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED					
Outcomes	No.	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Links to other Priorities
Enough affordable houses are delivered to meet housing need across the county in both rural and urban areas	1.1.1	<u>Conclude the procurement process with the appointment of a main contractor to build council homes</u>	April 2024	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	P2
	1.1.1	<u>Develop a delivery trajectory to enable more effective annual monitoring</u>	February 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	P2
	1.1.2	<u>Council House Delivery Programme - Obtain planning permission for Greenwood Avenue and Portland Avenue sites and start on site</u>	October 2024 February 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	P2
	1.1.3	<u>Council House Delivery Programme - Develop Confirm detailed rolling pipeline for of sites to ensure ongoing development of phase 1 and phase 2 sites plan</u>	June 2024 December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	P2
	1.1.4	<u>Commence development of Greenwood Avenue and Portland Avenue</u>	March 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	P2
	1.1.45	Deliver homes to meet housing needs in rural areas, through the Council House New Build Programme and in partnership with the Rural Working Group	March-December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	P2

Speed up the determination of planning applications	1.2.1	Identify additional resources, including staff, to support the development management function	December <del>2024</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Planning Manager (DCC)	
Enough houses are delivered to meet housing need across the county in both rural and urban areas	1.3.1	Deliver market and affordable housing and housing infrastructure in line with County Durham Plan (CDP) policy	December <del>2024</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2, P5</b>
	1.3.2	Determine a timeline for delivery of council owned housing allocations	December <del>2024</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Asset Strategy & Property Manager (DCC)	
Sufficient, suitable housing land is available to support economic growth and provide quality housing for the residents of the county	1.4.1	Identify and manage a brownfield sites programme. Including bids into NECA Brownfield Housing Fund	December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers - Homes England	<b>P2, P5</b>
A housing delivery pipeline exists to more effectively access funding opportunities	1.5.1	Develop a single housing delivery pipeline to include council and Registered Provider delivery priorities.	July-March 2025 <sup>4</sup>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P2, P<sup>5</sup></b>

	1.5.2	Integrate the pipeline of estate regeneration identified by the North East Housing Partnership and the council's delivery pipeline	July <del>March</del> 2025 <sup>4</sup>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P5</b>
	1.5.3	Deliver the Registered Providers affordable homes pipeline to meet needs including Seaham Garden Village and Roseberry Comprehensive School	<del>March</del> December 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P2, P3, P5</b>
	1.5.4	Regenerate Western Estate to deliver high quality and affordable homes	<del>March</del> December 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	
Enough suitable accommodation is available to meet the needs of students	1.6.1	Work with Durham University and developers to bring forward the allocations in the County Durham Plan identified for Purpose Built Student Accommodation	<del>Summer</del> December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Durham University	<b>P2, P3</b>
Communities are able to deliver their own housing	1.7.1	Deliver community led housing schemes in line with the Towns and Villages Programme Investment Plan	December <del>2024</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	
Empty properties are being brought back into use to support regeneration and meet needs	1.8.1	<del>Once NECA's devolved powers are established,</del> investigate the local/regional approach to empty properties action and enforcement powers (EDMOs)	December <del>2024</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - NECA	<b>P3</b>
	1.8.2	Develop an Empty Properties Strategy	<del>December</del> 2024 March 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	

Online mapping is being used to assist with housing delivery and regeneration	1.9.1	Develop an online mapping tool to assist with housing delivery and regeneration	<del>September</del> <u>March</u> 2025 <del>4</del>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	
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PRIORITY 2: ENSURE THAT EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE, SAFE AND SECURE HOUSING THAT SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLBEING					
Outcomes	No.	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Links to other Priorities
Review the current allocations and lettings policy to ensure they meet the needs of customers	2.1.1	Review the existing partnership agreement	March-July 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	
	2.1.2	Review Durham Key Options Review four areas of the lettings policy in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to the housing register</li> <li>Homelessness prevention</li> <li>Medical assessment Applicants with no housing need</li> </ul>	March-December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	P1, P4
Deliver the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) to ensure providers are fit for purpose	2.2.1	Work with all non-commissioned supported housing providers to ensure they are meeting minimum property and support standards	March-December 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	P4
	2.2.2	Develop a charter for non-commissioned supported housing providers	September 2024	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	
	2.2.3	Develop a Quality Assessment Framework for non-commissioned supported housing providers	September-February 2024 <sup>5</sup>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	

Prepare a temporary accommodation <a href="#">placement strategy framework and delivery plan</a> to provide suitable accommodation for those in need and reduce costs	2.3.1	Prepare temporary accommodation <a href="#">framework and delivery plan</a> to highlight how Durham place TA clients within <a href="#">its</a> own stock	<a href="#">April-December 2025</a>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P4</b>
<a href="#">Prepare a temporary accommodation placement policy to assist homeless households in finding accommodation</a>	2.4.1	<a href="#">Prepare a temporary accommodation placement policy</a>	<a href="#">July 2025</a>	<a href="#">Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)</a>	<b>P4</b>
Deliver home improvements to those with health conditions that are exacerbated by the cold	2.5.1	Promote the Warm and Healthy Homes campaign which offers free boiler repair and service to individuals with health conditions that are exacerbated by the cold	<a href="#">March-December 2025</a>	<a href="#">Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Public Health</a>	<b>P3</b>
Deliver the relevant actions of the Poverty Action Steering Group to help reduce poverty	2.6.1	Identify the affordability gaps and barriers in accessing housing in the social and private rented sector and work across services to implement solutions where possible	<a href="#">March-July 2025</a>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P3</b>
	2.6.2	Respond to the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy review, working with Revenues and Benefits	<a href="#">March-July 2025</a>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	

	2.6.3	Initiate a housing and employment pilot to assist those cohorts struggling to access affordable housing whilst entering employment	March-July 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P5</b>
Adopt the Housing Needs SPD and Interim Planning Statement for First Homes to increase the delivery of housing	2.7.1	Update the SPD following consultation and progress to adoption	September 2024	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1</b>
Work with Durham University to encourage students to access council services	2.8.1	Provide information, advice and guidance stands at freshers' weeks	October <del>2024</del> 2025	Safer Places Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P3, P5</b>
	2.8.2	Signpost council services available to students through the council's and Durham University's websites	October <del>2024</del> 2025	Safer Places Manager (DCC) - Durham University	<b>P1, P3, P5</b>
	2.8.3	Promote council services through communications systems in family hubs/GPs regarding housing information	October <del>2024</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manger (DCC) - Public Health	<b>P4</b>



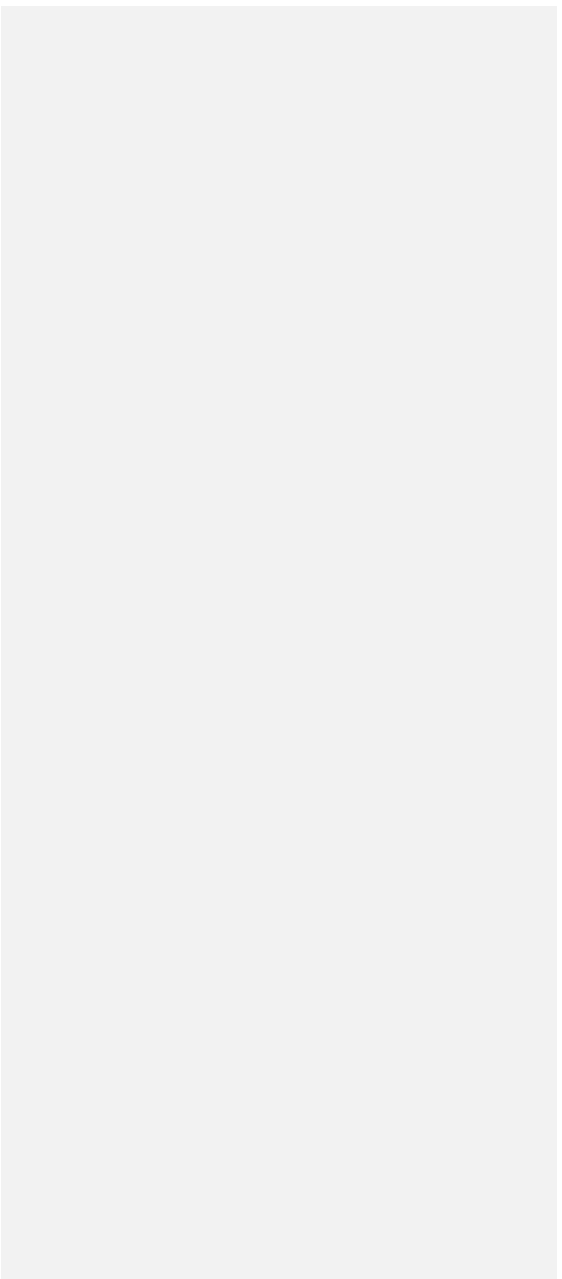
PRIORITY 3: ENSURE HIGH QUALITY, ENERGY EFFICIENT HOUSES AND EFFECTIVE LANDLORD SERVICES					
Outcomes	No.	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Links to other Priorities
Explore the need for additional licensing in Durham City	3.1.1	Consult with Durham University, Durham Student Union, Durham City Parish Council to gain an understanding of issues	<del>October 2024</del> <u>July 2025</u>	Business Compliance Manager (DCC)	
	3.1.2	Consider commissioning external consultants as per last assessment of additional licensing need (BRE used in 2012)	<del>December 2024</del> <u>July 2025</u>	Business Compliance Manager (DCC)	
Prevent fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions in domestic households to ensure warm and safe houses	3.2.1	Complete the Home Upgrade Grant scheme to retrofit private properties that are off the gas grid	March 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	3.2.2	Assist residents regarding eligibility checks for central heating grants through ECO4 including; Verifying household eligibility for ECO Flex route including low income and medical criteria on behalf of OFGEM	March 2025	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	3.2.3	Co-ordinated programme of Energy efficiency advice across the Combined Authority and specifically in County Durham	<u>July 2024</u> <del>December 2025</del>	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	

Prepare guidance on keeping houses free from damp and mould to ensure warm and safe houses	3.3.1	Issue new guidance for landlords and tenants in line with the new expectations from government on damp and mould action and in line with the new ombudsman code of guidance	<del>July 2024</del> <u>December 2025</u>	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
Ensure compliance with the Safety and Quality Standard (Consumer standards 1 April 2024) to ensure houses are warm, safe and fit for residents	3.4.1	Registered Providers to ensure an accurate, up to date evidenced understanding of their stock quality that reliably informs their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	
	3.4.2	Registered Providers to ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard unless exempted by the regulator	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	
	3.4.3	When acting as landlords, Registered Providers to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	
	3.4.4	Registered Providers to provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	

	3.4.5	Registered Providers to assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services	March 2025	Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P4</b>
Implement property inspections to ensure houses are warm, safe and fit for residents	3.5.1	Undertake a programme of formal inspections of empty properties that will target the worst properties contributing to community blight	<del>December 2024</del> <u>March 2025</u>	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
	3.5.2	Implement an inspection regime that targets occupied properties with lower EPCs	<del>December 2024</del> <u>March 2025</u>	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
	3.5.3	Continue reactive and proactive inspections of privately rented properties in both Selective Licensing and non-Selective Licensing areas	<del>December 2024</del> <u>2025</u>	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
	3.5.4	Carry out inspections of all properties belonging to landlords signed up to the voluntary accreditation scheme - The Durham Rental Standard	<del>December 2024</del> <u>2025</u>	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
Respond to the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 consultation to ensure the views of County Durham are considered	3.6.1	Prepare a response to the Government Consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023	<u>July 2024</u> <u>TBC</u>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>

Ensure estate and letting agents comply with their responsibilities to protect tenants	3.7.1	Carry out a desktop exercise for Estate and Letting Agents within County Durham to gauge compliance with Tenant Fees, Client Money Protection and Redress Scheme publication requirements	September 2024	Safer Places Manager (DCC)	
	3.7.2	Visit and take appropriate action against any Estate and Letting Agents where the desktop exercise has identified a level of non-compliance with Tenant Fees, Client Money Protection and Redress Scheme requirements	March 2025	Safer Places Manager (DCC)	

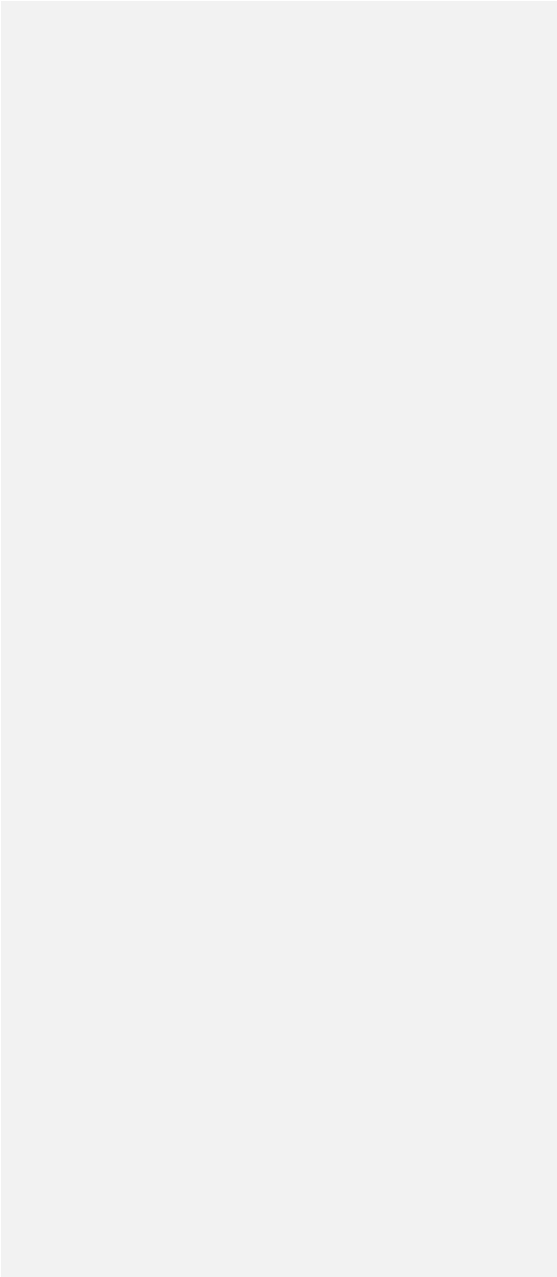
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<b>PRIORITY 4: ENSURE A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS FOR OLDER AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE, DISABLED PEOPLE AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, INCLUDING SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT</b>					
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Links to other Priorities</b>
Assess the housing needs of specialist groups including older people, children and young people, homeless and people with Learning Disability and Mental Health to ensure their needs are being met	4.1.1	Undertake a Needs Led Accommodation Review	<del>March</del> <u>July</u> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Public Health	<b>P3</b>
Deliver the Disabled Facilities Grants to enable people to stay in their own houses	4.2.1	Prepare a report on future disabled facility grant delivery	<del>July 2024</del> <u>April 2025</u>	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	4.2.2	Create an improved assessment tool for disabled facility grants	<del>June 2024</del> <u>April 2025</u>	Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
Acquire properties to meet housing needs, including those	4.3.1	Acquire the remaining properties to deliver temporary accommodation (from the 40 originally approved)	<del>December 2024</del> <u>March 2025</u>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>

requiring temporary accommodation	4.3.2	Deliver the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) including central and dispersed properties	<del>December 2024</del> <u>October 2025</u>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P2</b>
	4.3.3	Develop bids for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40 additional TA properties</li> <li>20 properties for larger families</li> </ul>	<del>December 2024</del> <u>February 2025</u>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P2</b>
	4.3.4	Work with Registered Providers to develop a strategic approach to the acquisition of accommodation for specialist groups for example older persons accommodation, care leavers, accommodation for victims of domestic abuse, ex-offenders and homeless	<del>December 2024</del> <u>2025</u>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P3</b>
	<u>4.3.5</u>	<u>Deliver Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 (8 properties in Year 1)</u>	<u>March 2025</u>	<u>Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)</u>	<b>P1, P2</b>
	<u>4.3.6</u>	<u>Deliver Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 (4 properties in Year 2)</u>	<u>March 2026</u>	<u>Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)</u>	<b>P1, P2</b>
Ensure adequate accommodation arrangements are in place, including sufficient temporary	4.4.1	<del>Work with the Home Office and the North East Migration Partnership to influence the County's allocation within the regional plan for dispersal accommodation</del>	<del>July 2024</del>	<del>Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)</del>	<b>P2</b>

accommodation, to avoid refugees with a positive asylum decision from becoming homeless	4.4.21	Undertake a review of the future demand on temporary accommodation and operational measures available to prevent homelessness within the cohort	<del>October 2024</del> <u>March 2025</u>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Housing Access & Independent Living Manager	<b>P2</b>
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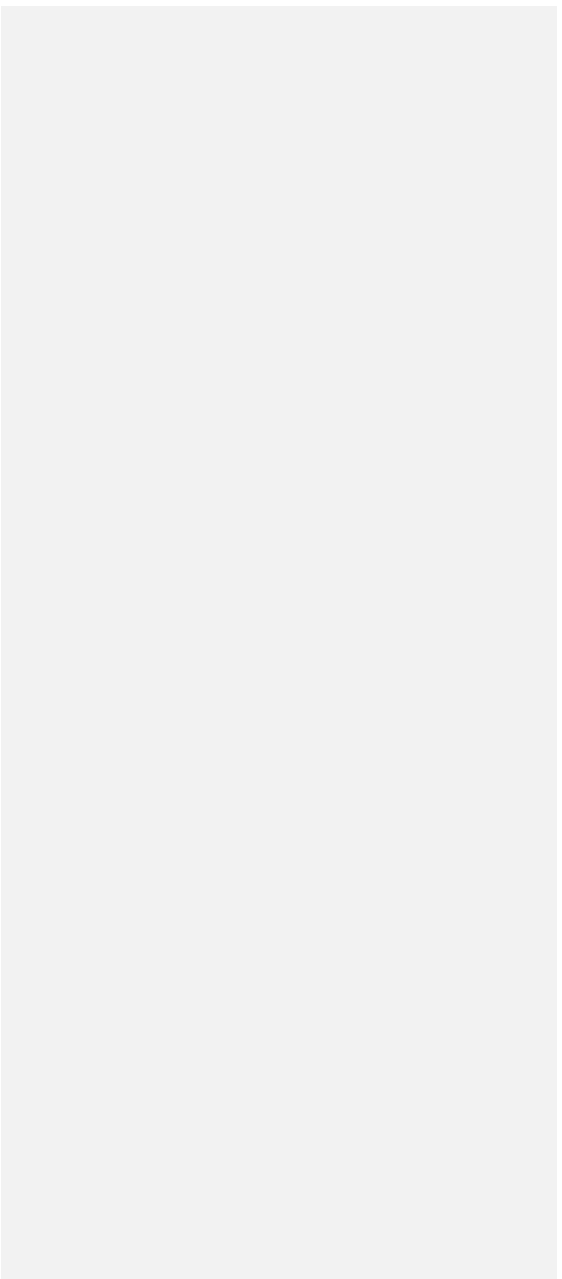


**PRIORITY 5: ENSURE HIGH QUALITY PLACEMAKING, CREATING SAFE, ACCESSIBLE, PROSPEROUS AND SUSTAINABLE PLACES TO LIVE**

Outcomes	No.	Actions	Timescale	Lead	Links to other Priorities
Develop and implement a programme of Targeted delivery plans (TDPs) to support housing regeneration	5.1.1	Explore opportunities for further resources for regeneration projects such as TDPs.	<del>March-December</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Building Safety and Housing Standards Manager (DCC)	
<del>Feed into the Regional Infrastructure Plan to ensure it reflects the infrastructure needs to support housing in the North East, including County Durham</del>	5.2.1	<del>Support the NECA Housing and Land Steering Group to contribute to the Regional Infrastructure Plan</del>	<del>December 2024</del>	<del>Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)</del>	<b>P1, P2</b>
Adopt the Design Code SPD to improve the quality of new housing	5.3.1	<del>Update the SPD following consultation and progress to adoption</del>	<del>July 2024</del>	<del>Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)</del>	
	<del>5.3.2.21</del>	Prepare Settlement Character Studies for settlements across the County in support of the Design Code SPD with 50 completed	<del>March-December</del> 2025	Planning Manager (DCC)	

Deliver Horden Masterplan to regenerate the numbered streets in Horden	5.43.1	Acquire properties on Third Street <u>and Fifth Street</u> in line with the Horden Masterplan, with the aim of 100% properties acquired through negotiation	<u>March-December 2025</u>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P1, P2, P3, P5</b>
	5.43.2	Provide support to owners and occupiers of Third Street <u>and Fifth Street</u> to enable the delivery of the Horden Masterplan	<u>March-December 2025</u>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
	5.43.3	<u>Submit a business case to NECA to apply for Brownfield Housing funding to deliver Phase 2 of the Horden Masterplan</u>	July 2024	<u>Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)</u>	<b>P1</b>
	5.43.4	Secure a development partner to help deliver future phases of the Horden Masterplan	December <u>2024-2025</u>	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)	
	<u>5.3.5</u>	<u>Obtain planning permission for Third, Fourth and Fifth Street for new housing development</u>	<u>June 2025</u>	<u>Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC)</u>	
Review the Memorandum of Understanding between Durham County Council and Durham University to increase the emphasis on housing issues	5.54.1	Undertake a review of the MoU and explore whether more emphasis on housing and accommodation is required	March 2025	Managing Director Business Durham (DCC)	<b>P1, P2, P3</b>

Explore ways to improve engagement with communities, including students and tenants in relation to placemaking and how they access services	5.65.1	Explore ways to improve engagement with communities, including students and tenants in relations to placemaking and how they access services	October <del>2024</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Consultation and Engagement Manager (DCC)	<b>P2</b>
Explore opportunities for housing regeneration to support Town Centres to improve their vitality and viability	5.76.1	Explore opportunities for health on the high street/one public estate interventions	December <del>2024</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Economic Development Manager (DCC) - Public Health	<b>P2</b>
	5.76.2	Explore opportunities for new housing in town centres through the Towns and Villages Programme	<del>March-December</del> 2025	Strategy and Delivery Manager (DCC) - Economic Development Manager (DCC)	
Enable collaboration between social housing providers to support local place making	5.87.1	Establish a new place-making group which will join-up delivery	<del>Summer-2024</del> July 2025	Chief Executives of Registered providers	<b>P2, P3</b>
Reduce digital exclusion of those living in social housing and in rural communities	5.98.1	Develop a digital and data collaboration model with social housing providers - connect suppliers, share understanding of needs, improve delivery, and deliver social tariffs, social value	<del>March-December</del> 2025	Strategic Manager (Digital Engagement) (DCC) - Chief Executives of Registered Providers	<b>P1, P2</b>



**County Council**

**22 January 2025**

**Updated Local Code of Corporate  
Governance**



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**Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Portfolio  
Holder for Finance**

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report provides Council with the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance (LCoCG), which was considered and approved by Audit Committee 29 November 2024.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The Local Code of Corporate Governance is a public statement that sets out the way the Council will meet its commitment to demonstrating that it has the necessary corporate governance arrangements in place to perform effectively.
- 3 Various updates and amendments have been made to the Local Code of Corporate Governance following the annual governance review 2023/24, to reflect changes during the year and to better reflect the arrangements currently in place. The updated document is attached at Appendix 2.
- 4 At the meeting on the 29 November 2024, the Audit Committee considered and approved a draft version of the revised Code, which was marked-up to highlight each individual change. It is a requirement for Full Council to consider the Local Code of Corporate Governance on an annual basis and the updated document is attached at Appendix 2.

## **Recommendation**

- 5 Council is recommended to receive, approve and adopt the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance (attached at Appendix 2), which was approved by Audit Committee 29 November 2024.

## **Background**

- 6 The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way which functions are exercised.
- 7 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including the management of risks.
- 8 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require a local authority to review at least once a year the effectiveness of its system of internal control. This requirement will be fulfilled if the review is conducted in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 (the DGG Framework).
- 9 The Council should be able to demonstrate that its governance structures comply with the core and sub-principles contained in the Framework and, to facilitate this, it should therefore develop and maintain a Local Code of Corporate Governance reflecting the principles set out.

## **Local Code of Corporate Governance**

- 10 The Local Code of Corporate Governance is a public statement that sets out the way the Council will meet its commitment to demonstrating that it has the necessary corporate governance arrangements in place to perform effectively. It represents a key component of the Council's governance arrangements and applies to all Council members, officers, partners, and stakeholders in their dealings with the Council.
- 11 The Code was revamped to meet the requirements of the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016), which remains current, and is now reviewed annually.
- 12 The Code has been revised to incorporate elements of the Council's governance arrangements that have been strengthened or updated to ensure ongoing effectiveness, taking account of the annual governance review 2023/24.

## **Author**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The governance review process ensures that the Council discharges its statutory duties under the Local Government Act 1999 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as set out at paragraphs 5 to 8 of the report. The Code of Corporate Governance enables the Council to demonstrate how it complies with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016.

### **Finance**

There are no financial implications associated with this report. However, financial planning and management is a key component of effective corporate governance.

### **Consultation**

Engaging local communities meets a core principle of The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) & The Society of Local Authority Chief Executive and Senior Managers (SOLACE) guidance.

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

Engaging local communities including hard to reach groups meets a core principle of the CIPFA/ SOLACE guidance.

### **Climate Change**

There are no direct climate change implications, but good governance helps to avoid or minimise adverse impacts.

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

There are no impacts on staffing but ensuring the adequate capability of staff meets a core principle of the CIPFA/ SOLACE guidance.



## **Accommodation**

There are no accommodation implications, but asset management is a key component of effective corporate governance.

## **Risk**

There are no reportable risks associated with the report, but the assessment of corporate risk is a key component of the Council's governance arrangements.

## **Procurement**

There are no procurement implications, but the procurement function helps meet several core principles of the CIPFA/ SOLACE guidance by, for example, minimising fraud, corruption and non-compliance with legislation and good practice, thereby helping to secure value for money and effective service delivery.

# **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

# **LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require a local authority to conduct a review at least once in a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control. A statement reporting on the review must be included in an Annual Governance Statement published with the Statement of Accounts.
- 1.2 The Annual Governance Statement must be “prepared in accordance with proper practices in relation to accounts”. To help meet this requirement, this code has been produced in accordance with Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016), “The DGG Framework”.

## **2. What is Governance?**

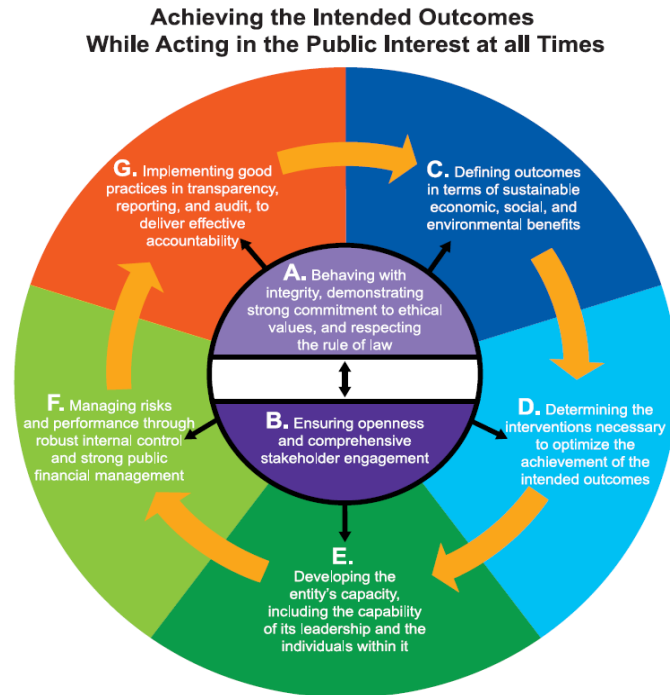
- 2.1 The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy / International Federation of Accountants, 2014), the ‘International Framework’, defines governance as follows:

*Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.*

- 2.2 The International Framework also states that:

*To deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity’s objectives while acting in the public interest at all times. Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders.*

2.3 The diagram below, taken from the International Framework shows how the various principles of good governance in the public sector relate to each other.



### **3 The Principles of Good Governance**

- 3.1 The DGG Framework requires governance processes and structures to focus on the attainment of sustainable outcomes for the economy, society and the environment. The Council acknowledges that sustainability and the links between governance and public financial management are crucial and pledges to take account of the impact of current decisions and actions on future generations.
- 3.2 Principles A and B are consistently applied through principles C to G and ensure that the Council achieves its intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times. This requires:
- A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.**
  - B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.**
- 3.3 In addition to the overarching requirements for acting in the public interest in principles A and B, achieving good governance in the public sector also requires effective arrangements for:
- C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.**
  - D. Determining and planning the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.**
  - E. Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.**
  - F. Managing risks, data and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.**
  - G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.**

### **4 The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance**

- 4.1 The Council is committed to, and endeavours to maintain, an effective governance framework to meet the principles set out in this Code.
- 4.2 This Code also aims to ensure that the Council responds appropriately to sustained pressures from a variety of sources.

4.3 The components that make up the Council's governance framework are many and varied. They include: -

- The statutory officers with responsibilities and powers to protect good governance, namely, the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Section 151 Local Government Act 1972 Officer (Corporate Director of Resources) and the Monitoring Officer (Director of Legal and Democratic Services).
- The [Head of Corporate Affairs](#) reports directly to the Chief Executive and leads on the council's management of corporate affairs and provides support to the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team to deliver the strategic priorities of the council. This non-statutory role includes responsibility for corporate communications and media as well as corporate strategy, planning and performance.
- Internal and partner strategy documents that set out a longer-term vision for the future of the County and identify the most important priorities.
- Internal and partner policy documents and codes that regulate committee and business activities to ensure that they comply with the law and that the Council's objectives and values are supported.
- Committees and officer groups that regulate and/or monitor Council or business activities to ensure that they comply with the law and that the Council's objectives and values are supported.
- Other systems, processes and documents, including self-assessment tools, that support or evidence the principles of good governance set out in The DGG Framework.

4.4 The key document supporting the Council's governance arrangements is the [Constitution](#), which sets out how we operate, how decisions are made and the rules and procedures we follow to ensure our work is efficient and transparent and that we are accountable to local people. The Constitution Working Group, which is chaired by the Leader of the Council and consists of the lead Members from each political party, co-ordinates proposed changes, and these are approved by Full Council. A full annual review is carried out each year.

4.5 A fundamental feature of the Council's governance arrangements is the overview and scrutiny system, the role of which is to review policy and challenge whether the Executive has made the right decisions to deliver policy goals. Audit Committees are a key component of an authority's governance framework. Their function is to provide an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management. The purpose of the audit committee is to provide those charged with governance independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and governance processes. Another

key feature is the Standards Committee, which is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, independent members, and co-opted members. Further details on the overview and scrutiny function and the Standards Committee are included under Principle A.

- 4.6 This section describes, with reference to the components of the Council's governance framework, how each of the principles and sub-principles of this Code will be met. In addition to the components listed above, where relevant, references to key legislation, professional standards and codes of practice are made.

***Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.***

Why this is important

- 4.7 The Council is accountable not only for how much it spends, but also for how it uses the resources under its stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes it has achieved. In addition, the Council has an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, it can demonstrate the appropriateness of all its actions and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.

How we meet this principle

- 4.8 Key governance documents supporting Principle A include:

[Constitution](#) – Codes of Conduct for Members; Contract Procedure Rules; Decision Making; Functions and Responsibilities of Key Officers; Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements; Protocol on Member/Officer Relations; Other Codes and Protocols; Roles and Functions of Members.

Other – Code of Our Values, Behaviours and Conduct (Employees); [Confidential Reporting Code \(Whistleblowing Policy\)](#); [Corporate Complaints Policy](#); [Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy](#); [Fraud Response Plan](#); Member Role Descriptions ([Councillor Compact](#)); Officer and Member Gifts & Hospitality Register and Procedures; [Overview and Scrutiny Handbook](#); [Slavery and human trafficking statement 2023-24](#); Statutory Officers; [Social Value in Procurement 2023 - 2025 Policy Statement](#).

## A1 Behaving with integrity

4.9 The Council ensures that its values are communicated and understood, and that members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated. This is achieved by:

- Setting out in the [Code of Our Values, Behaviours and Conduct](#) what is important to us. We work together to achieve the best for people; we put people and communities at the heart of everything we do and value our employees; we value, trust and support each other; we embrace change and look for better ways to deliver services.
- Setting out, in the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations and their respective codes of conduct, the behaviour that is expected between members and officers, and the implications of any breaches. The Protocol, which may be taken into account if there is a complaint about a member or an officer, promotes politeness and respect as well as clarity and certainty in relation to roles and expectations, including limitations of behaviour. The Monitoring Officer periodically reminds members and officers of their mutual obligations.
- Seeking individual commitment to the codes from members and officers during induction, through annual, written reminders and in performance appraisals.
- Assigning the Constitution Working Group, chaired by the Leader of the Council and consisting of the lead Members from each political party, to oversee the maintenance and approval of the codes and protocols in the [Constitution](#). The Codes of Conduct are intended to be consistent with the Seven Principles of Public Life\* (the Nolan Principles), which must be observed by members and employees when conducting the business of the Council or acting as a representative of the Council.  
\* Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership.
- Setting out in the Financial Procedure Rules, supported by more detailed Financial Management Standards, the framework for managing the Council's financial affairs and ensuring that they are strictly adhered to in practice.
- Setting out in the Contract Procedure Rules how contracts for goods, works, services and utilities should be put in place and managed, and detailing the record keeping and reporting requirements related to procurement activity.
- Members leading by example by adhering to these principles in decision making and during meetings with fellow members, employees, the community and partners.
- Maintaining Registers of Interest for members and officers and formally registering interests at meetings and declaring gifts and hospitality. The Monitoring Officer maintains quarterly oversight of the Register of



Officers Gifts and Hospitality and presents an annual report to the Corporate Management Team. The process for declaring officers' personal interests, [gifts and hospitality](#) is digitised and declarations are recorded on the employee's personal file.

- Asking the Council to agree a [Members Allowance Scheme](#) at least once every four years, as required by The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations (England) Regulations 2003, following a review by the Independent Remuneration Panel and consideration by the Constitution Working Group.

4.10 The Council endeavours to demonstrate, communicate and embed its values through the following policies and processes, which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively. This is achieved by:

- Providing guidance, through the [Fraud Response Plan](#), which supports the [Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy](#), to employees and managers on the procedures that must be followed in the event of suspected fraud, theft or other irregularity.
- Requiring the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager to verbally inform the Section 151 Officer, [Audit Committee](#) and External Audit of any serious cases of fraud.
- Reporting the outcomes of anti-fraud and corruption work to [Audit Committee](#) as part of Protecting the Public Purse updates.
- Enabling employees, through the [Confidential Reporting Code](#) to raise serious concerns within the Council rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' externally.
- Including in the Durham Managers training programme a course that explains how the [Confidential Reporting Code](#) should be used as a means to 'blow the whistle' where appropriate.
- Using the [procedure for reporting breaches](#) to enable individuals with a role in the Local Government Pension Scheme to fulfil their duty to report breaches of law that are likely to be of material significance to the Pensions Regulator.
- Maintaining arrangements, through the [Corporate Complaints Policy](#), for non-statutory complaints about services, which are reported to [Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board](#) along with details of investigations by the Commissioner for Local Administration.
- Maintaining arrangements for complaints against employees, which are referred to the Corporate Fraud Team, Human Resources and the respective Service Management to ensure a proper investigation.
- Assigning the Monitoring Officer to oversee the arrangements for conflicts of interest, gifts and hospitality for members and officers, who are required to review their declarations annually.

- Publishing the Register of Gifts, Interests and Hospitality for Members on the website under the relevant meeting or on the [Your Councillor webpage](#).

## **A2 Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values**

4.11 The Council seeks to establish, monitor and maintain ethical standards and performance, while underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation. This is achieved by:

- Assigning the [Standards Committee](#) to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its councillors, independent members and co-opted members.
- In January 2023, the Council signed up to the LGA's Debate not Hate Campaign and the Standards Committee monitors the progress and reviews the Council's arrangements to ensure they reflect best practice.
- Assigning the Appeals and Complaints Committee to determine appeals against decisions made by the Council.
- Maintaining an effective scrutiny function that encourages constructive challenge and enhances performance through the [Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board](#) and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- The role, functions and scope of the [Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board](#) and the five thematic committees are set out in detail in the [Constitution](#) and the [Overview and Scrutiny Handbook](#). They allow a wider involvement in Council business by involving non-councillors from the wider public sector, voluntary and community groups to help them in their work. They may make reports and recommendations to the Executive and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery.
- Review and scrutinise the conduct, decisions and actions of Police and Crime Commissioner through the [Durham Police and Crime Panel](#), which is made up of members from Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council.
- Periodic review of the Officers Gifts and Hospitality Register by the Monitoring Officer.
- Providing, through the [Constitution](#), roles for independent members and co-opted members on the Standards Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, [Audit Committee](#) and Police and Crime Panel.
- Reporting bi-annually, through the Internal Audit Service, to Corporate Management Team and the [Audit Committee](#) on investigations into misconduct, including any measures taken to enhance the control environment in order to prevent incidences happening in the future.

- Embedding ethical values through a variety of channels, including online training, briefings and news bulletins.
- Rewarding good ethical behaviour through the Inspiring People Awards and awarding instant recognition certificates to those who make an exceptional contribution in this area.
- The [Slavery and human trafficking statement 2023-24](#), through which the Council aims to understand and address all potential modern slavery and human trafficking risks related to its business.
- The procurement team undertake an annual Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply Ethics accreditation and certification as a whole team to demonstrate ethical procurement practices demonstrating commitment to the Council strong ethical values.

4.12 The Council places emphasis on agreed ethical values by:

- Maintaining a range of key ethical codes and protocols, such as the codes of conduct for members and employees, and the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations, in the Council [Constitution](#).
- Using the above codes and protocols to set the tone for subsidiary policies and procedures in areas such as procurement, recruitment, staff discipline, gifts and hospitality and declarations of interest.

4.13 The Council requires external providers of services on its behalf to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards. This is achieved by:

- Including the Council's ethical values in protocols for partnership working.
- Seeking, through the [Social Value in Procurement 2023 - 2025 Policy Statement](#), to implement procedures that protect the long-term interests of the communities we represent, in line with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. Instructing bidding organisations to bring the above policy to the attention of bidders.
- Addressing ethical supply chain issues through [Sustainable Buying Standards](#), which are mandatory in all relevant council contracts.
- Vetting potential contractors for convictions and violations for specified offences, as required by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

### **A3 Respecting the rule of law**

4.14 The Council endeavours to ensure that members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations. It also seeks to create the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders, and members, can fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative, regulatory and other legal requirements. This is achieved through:

- The [Constitution](#);
  - Committing to exercise all powers and duties in accordance with the law;
  - Setting out Member Role Descriptions and the functions and responsibilities of key officers, recognising those posts that are statutory;
  - Committing to provide the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer with such officers, accommodation and other resources as are in their opinion sufficient to allow their duties to be performed;
  - Designating the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service in accordance with Section 4 Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
  - Designating the Corporate Director of Resources as the Section 151 Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to fulfil the governance requirements of the CIPFA\* Statement on the Role of the CFO in Local Government (2010).
- \* Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy
- Maintaining, under the supervision of the Chief Executive, a chief officer structure that is equipped to respond to modern challenges faced by the Council.
- Making the CFO a member of Corporate Management Team, reporting directly to the Chief Executive and reviewing all reports to Cabinet which have financial implications.
- Maintaining arrangements for members and officers to work together on the work programme of the Cabinet, which is managed through a system of Cabinet pre-agenda meetings, supported by regular briefing sessions held by Corporate Directors with Cabinet Portfolio Members and their support Members.
- Providing specialist legal advice through Legal & Democratic Services.
- Providing training, awareness and advice, through central support services, to meet general legal requirements in areas such as data protection, freedom of information, equalities and health and safety.
- Making staff aware of relevant statutory provisions through formal training, written guidance and implementing appropriate service-specific arrangements to ensure compliance.
- The Council's [Corporate Enforcement Policy](#), which sets out the standards and guidance applied by officers authorised to act on behalf of the Council in its role as a regulator and enforcement agency.
- The [Procedure for Reporting Durham County Council Pension Fund Breaches](#) formalises the approach to managing breaches with oversight from the Local Pension Board.

4.15 The Council strives to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders by:

- Designating, in accordance with Section 5 Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services as Monitoring Officer, who attends Corporate Management Team and advises on legal issues.
- Authorising the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, under the [Constitution](#) to institute, defend or participate in any legal proceedings to give effect to decisions of the Council or in any case where she considers that such action is necessary to protect the Council's interests.
- [Selective licensing](#) of privately rented properties from April 2022 until March 2027, which aims to drive up standards and thereby improve communities. The Council uses its powers to regulate landlords and managing agents in areas that suffer from low housing demand or high levels of anti-social behaviour or deprivation.
- Tackling anti-social behaviour with partners through the [Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2022-2025](#).

4.16 The Council endeavours to deal effectively with corruption, misuse of power and breaches of legal and regulatory provisions by:

- Maintaining a dedicated Corporate Fraud Team to support its counter fraud arrangements.
- Vigorously dealing with breaches of legal or regulatory provisions through disciplinary or criminal proceedings, as appropriate.
- Enabling employees, contractors and suppliers, through the [Confidential Reporting Code \(Whistleblowing Policy\)](#), to raise concerns about potential breaches of conduct in decision-making.
- Thoroughly investigating and, if confirmed, vigorously pursuing any allegations of corruption and misuse of power, seeking the strongest possible sanctions against those who seek to defraud the Council, regardless of whether they are staff, members, contractors, external individuals and organisations.
- Undertaking Public Protection Service enforcement and intervention activity in relation to licensing, neighbourhoods, trading standards and safer communities.

## ***Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.***

### Why this is important

4.17 Local government is run for the public good. The Council should therefore ensure openness in its activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders. Institutional stakeholders are the other organisations that local government needs to work with to improve services and outcomes (such as commercial partners and suppliers as well as other public or third sector organisations) or organisations to which they are accountable.

### How we meet this principle

4.18 Key governance documents supporting Principle B include:

[Constitution](#) – Audit Committee Role; Decision Making; How the Council operates; Joint Arrangements and Partnerships; Officer Scheme of Delegations.

Other – [Area Action Partnerships](#) Terms of Reference; [Consultation Statement](#); [Consultations web page](#); [Framework for Good Workforce](#) [Mental Health in County Durham Businesses](#); [Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 - 2028](#); [notice of key decisions webpage](#); [officer decisions webpage](#); [partnership governance framework](#); [petitions webpage](#); [Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#); [County Durham Vision 2035](#); [Transparency and Accountability webpage](#).

## **B1 Openness**

4.19 The Council maintains an open culture and encourages wide public involvement in determining the most appropriate and effective interventions and courses of action. This is achieved by:

- Encouraging a climate of openness, headed by the Council Leader who holds regular Cabinet meetings at various locations in the County.
- Maintaining a website that is designed to make it easy for users to find information and includes a [Transparency and Accountability webpage](#) to comply with the [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#).
- Publishing information on the website about services provided, land and assets owned by the Council, organisational structures and salaries, counter fraud, how money is spent and how services are bought.

- Deploying a range of research, consultation and engagement techniques so that the selected approach is fit for each given purpose.
- Taking a planned approach to encourage participation in new initiatives to ensure that the public's views are incorporated into decision making processes.

4.20 The Council seeks to make decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes, with a presumption for openness and, where relevant, giving reasons for keeping any decision confidential. Clear reasoning and evidence will be provided for decisions, being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used to ensure that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear. These aims are achieved by:

- Setting out in the [Constitution](#) how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures followed to ensure that these are effective, transparent and accountable to local people.
- Publishing on the website: advance [notice of key decisions](#) covering a rolling period of four months; decisions made by the Executive, within two days of the respective meeting; and all major decisions that are in the public domain.
- Publishing all [officer decisions](#) made under the Officer Scheme of Delegations ([Constitution](#)).
- Supporting the Council's decision-making processes with:
  - A [Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#);
  - An [Audit Committee](#) responsible for monitoring and reviewing processes for risk management, internal control, governance and associated assurance; and
  - Arrangements to ensure that they comply with legal requirements and that all reports requiring a decision include the legal implications, confirm that legal advice has been obtained on proposals, and the source of that legal advice.
- Including in the Council's stated principles for decision making the giving of reasons for decisions and supporting them with references to legal or other professional advice and stating the potential implications in terms of finance, staffing, risk, human rights and several other factors.

## **B2 Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders**

4.21 The Council seeks to effectively engage with institutional stakeholders and, where necessary, develop formal and informal partnerships to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear. The aims of this approach are to

ensure that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably, with efficient use of resources. This is achieved by:

- Establishing a vision for the [County Durham Partnership](#) that provides a strategic direction and enables close working between partners for the benefit of our residents.
- The [County Durham Partnership](#), chaired by the Leader of the Council, including: the board and forum, which bring together the board and local communities; five partnerships (Health and Wellbeing Board and Outbreak Engagement Board (statutory); Safe Durham Partnership (statutory); Economic Partnership; Environment and Climate Change Partnership and County Durham Together Partnership); Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership; Durham Safeguarding Adult Partnership; Better Together Voluntary and Community Sector Forum; and all [Area Action Partnerships](#).
- Managing relationships with [partners](#) to ensure that: members are clear about their roles and responsibilities; there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership; and representatives both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions.
- Working with strategic partners through the Local Resilience Forum on collective capacity and capability, protection from the COVID-19 virus, managing deaths and planning for the future.
- Providing support and oversight, through a Chief Officer Safeguarding Group chaired by the Chief Executive, to chief officers across all statutory agencies of the safeguarding arrangements for children and adults' services. The Group has an independent Chair and includes officers from the Council, NHS and the Police.
- Regularly reviewing governance arrangements and structures for strategic partnerships to evaluate their effectiveness.
- Allowing, through the [Constitution](#), joint arrangements to be established for specific purposes such as the provision and maintenance of crematoria, and setting out details of existing joint arrangements, including purpose, parties and effective dates.
- Shaping and supporting a common vision and approach for community engagement through the [County Durham Partnership](#).
- Including in the [CDP](#) a range of key public, private and voluntary sector organisations that work together to improve the quality of life for the people within County Durham.
- Managing, within service groupings, informal, collaborative working arrangements with external organisations.
- Ensuring that [partnerships](#) are based on trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners, and that the added value of partnership working is explicit.



- The County Durham Together Partnership, formerly the Prevention Steering Group, identifies areas of work requiring early interventions to reduce demand on services and impacts on stakeholders.
- The [Statement of Community Involvement](#) sets out our advice on how town and parish councils and Neighbourhood Forums should seek to involve and consult on the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

### **B3 Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively**

4.22 Through the [Consultation Statement](#), the Council seeks to establish a clear policy on the type of issues on which it will consult on and involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders. The Council aims to ensure that the views of local people and visitors are used to set priorities, influence policy and decision making, and that service provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes. Council-wide Consultation Officer Group, chaired by Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement, coordinates all consultation activity across the authority.

4.23 The Council endeavours to ensure that communication methods are effective, and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement, in order to collect and evaluate the views, experiences and future needs of people and organisations of different backgrounds. This approach is combined with effective feedback mechanisms to demonstrate how views have been taken into account and balancing feedback from more active and other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity. This is achieved by:

- Assigning the Corporate Communications and Marketing Team to lead on communications with external audiences through local, regional and national media with direction and guidance provided through communications protocols.
- Welcoming [petitions](#) and recognising that they are an effective way for people to voice their concerns.
- Engaging with the community, through 14 multi-agency [Area Action Partnerships](#), to identify and address local priorities and utilise locality budgets to drive improvements to the local area.
- Channelling communications and updates on COVID-19 through a [single point of entry](#).
- Using the consultation process to involve a range of stakeholders in refreshing the [Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 - 2028](#).
- Publishing results of [consultation and engagement campaigns](#) on the website with explanations of what has been changed as a result of the views and comments collected.

- Selecting appropriate consultation techniques and engaging through [Area Action Partnerships](#) and the voluntary sector to involve all sections of the community effectively.
- Ensuring that selected techniques recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities and establish processes for dealing with these competing demands.
- Seeking, with guidance from the [County Durham Vision 2035](#), the [Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 - 2028](#), supported by the decision making process, to manage resources in ways that do not compromise the quality of life of future generations or those in the wider world.
- The [Framework for Good Workforce Mental Health in County Durham Businesses](#) was developed for small and medium sized businesses and voluntary and community sector organisations, and aims to improve awareness and promote the importance of good workforce mental health.

***Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits***

Why this is important

4.24 The long-term nature and impact of many of the Council’s responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the Council’s purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.

How we meet this principle

4.25 Key governance documents supporting Principle C include:

[Constitution](#) – Decision Making; Protocol on Member/Officer Relations.

Other – [Growing up in County Durham Strategy 2023 - 2025](#); [Climate and Emergency Plan](#); Capital Strategy; [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) and service plans; [County Durham Plan](#); [County Durham Vision 2035](#); [Digital Strategy, customer services charter and service standards](#); [Equality Policy](#); [Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 - 2028](#), [Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28](#); [performance management framework](#); [Police and Crime Plan for 2021-24](#); [Inclusive Economic](#)

[Strategy; Risk Management Policy and Strategy; Safe Durham Partnership Plan](#).

## C1 Defining outcomes

4.26 The [County Durham Vision 2035](#), which has been produced by the Council in conjunction with its partners on the [County Durham Partnership](#), and demonstrates its shared long-term vision for the future of County Durham. The Vision includes the following ambitions for the place of County Durham:

- there are more and better jobs,
- people live long and independent lives, and
- our communities are well connected and supportive of each other.

There are five underlying themes, which emerged from the extensive public consultation: rural communities, climate change, the natural environment, new technologies and the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. The Vision seeks to address several issues arising from an analysis of performance data and emerging policy, which were further refined after consultation with residents and other interested groups. These issues are: the economy; tourism; community spirit; children's health, safety and access to a good education; health; transport; housing; and revitalisation of high streets.

The Vision and ambitions are supported by the following [County Durham Partnership](#) Plans and strategies:

- [Safe Durham Partnership Strategy 2024-29](#),
- [Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 - 2028](#),
- [Growing up in County Durham Strategy 2023 - 2025](#),
- [Inclusive Economic Strategy](#) and,
- [Climate Emergency Response Plan](#).

4.27 In addition to the above arrangements, outcomes are defined through:

- The [Council Plan](#), which is the primary corporate planning document for the county council and details the Council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Vision for County Durham 2035 together with its own objectives and change agenda. The [Council Plan](#) aligns to both the council's Medium-Term Financial Plan and the County Durham Plan, which is a spatial representation of our ambitions around housing, jobs and the environment, as well as the transport, schools and infrastructure to support it. The [Council Plan](#) is underpinned by a series of corporate strategies and service planning

arrangements providing more detailed information on the actions being undertaken to deliver on our priorities and to avoid duplication.

- Developing, through the [Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28](#) a financial framework in line with the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) that enables members and officers to ensure policy initiatives can be planned for delivery within available resources and can be aligned to priority outcomes.
- Subjecting the delivery of the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) and the [Medium Term Financial Plan](#) to detailed and frequent monitoring undertaken by Corporate Management Team and Cabinet.
- [Police and Crime Plan for 2021-24](#).
- Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan.
- NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups Strategic Plans.
- The [Digital Strategy](#), which sets out the future for connecting Durham, how we will digitally improve our services, support our people, our communities and our organisation to deliver better outcomes for the people of the county.
- The [customer services charter and service standards](#), which outline how customers can expect to be treated when they get in touch with us and specific levels of service that they should receive.
- The [County Durham's Early Help Strategy 2024 - 2026](#), which sets out our vision, priorities and approach for providing 'early help' to address inequalities, promote opportunity and secure better outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- The [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Strategy](#) for the period 2022-24, which includes a vision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities that is the same as for all children and young people in County Durham: that they are safe and part of their community, have the best start in life, have good physical and mental health, and gain the education, skills, and experiences to prepare them for adulthood.
- The [Think Autism in County Durham Strategy](#), which aims to ensure that in County Durham all autistic people live fulfilling and rewarding lives.
- The [Town Investment Plan](#), which will lead to the re-use of derelict buildings, walking and cycling improvements, public realm and leisure schemes across the county.
- The [Tenancy Strategy 2022 - 2027](#), which sets out the Council's expectations to the registered providers of social housing operating within the County regarding the types of tenancy they should offer to their tenants.
- The [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029](#), which sets out how Durham County Council aim to achieve the four priorities of homelessness.

## **C2 Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits**

4.28 The Council considers and balances the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision, taking a longer-term view with due regard to the wider public interest and potential risks. The Council is committed to acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the Council's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints. This is achieved by:

- Pursuing economic and environmental benefits through the [Climate Emergency Response Plan 2022 - 2024](#) and pursuing social benefits through the other themes.
- Including in MTFP planning cycles actions to address the ecological emergency declared for County Durham by Cabinet in [April 2022](#) in response to international and national declines in natural habitats and species.
- Using decision making processes, which include management of performance and risks, to support the achievement of high-level objectives in furtherance of economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Pursuing economic, social and environmental benefits in the development the [Medium Term Financial Plan](#).
- Preparing the capital budget reflecting the priorities detailed in the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#), using criteria laid down in the Corporate Capital Protocol.
- Advising Cabinet on the Capital Programme through the Member Officer Working Group for Capital, which is responsible for scrutinising capital budget revisions and monitoring progress on schemes.
- Following the principles of decision making set out in the [Constitution](#).
- Guiding members and employees in their relations with one another and seeking to enhance and maintain integrity by demanding very high standards of personal conduct through the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations ([Constitution](#)).
- Determining, through the [Consultation Statement](#), the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs.
- [The Pension Fund Investment Strategy Statement](#), which includes details of how environmental, social and governance issues are incorporated into the investment decision-making process and a policy on investment stewardships.

4.29 The Council seeks to ensure fair treatment and fair access to services and opportunities by:

- Using the [Equality Policy](#) to reinforce the Council's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, including compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, to understand and seek to prevent or mitigate any potential negative impacts as a result of Council decisions for people with protected characteristics (age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, transgender).
- Supporting the [Equality Policy](#) with an equality impact assessment process, which ensures that the impact on equality is considered in the Council's decision making.
- Promoting equality and diversity across all of the Council's work through the [Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board](#) and Scrutiny Committees.
- The [Accessibility Statement](#), through which the Council endeavours to make the full range of services available on our website accessible to everyone, regardless of their skill or technology.
- Using the [Poverty Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2026](#) to respond to the impacts poverty and its related issues are having on residents across the county.
- Publishing the [Gender Pay Gap Report 2023](#), which sets out Durham County Council's gender pay gap data, analysis and plans for long term improvements.
- Endeavouring to fulfil the requirements of the Armed Forces (Covenant) Regulations 2022, which came into force in November 2022 and aim to ensure that serving and former armed forces personnel and their families are treated fairly and will not be disadvantaged in accessing public services by their military service.
- Signposting support for the rising cost of living through the [Help with your money](#) portal on the Council's website.

***Principle D: Determining and planning the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes***

Why this is important

4.30 Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed continually to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

## How we meet this principle

4.31 Key governance documents supporting Principle D include:

[Constitution](#) – Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules; Decision Making; Financial Procedure Rules; Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements.

[Other](#) – Capital Programme; Council Plan and service plans; [Medium Term Financial Plan](#); [partnership governance framework](#); [Performance Management Framework](#); [Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report](#); [Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#); [County Durham Vision 2035](#); [Social Value in Procurement 2023 - 2025 Policy Statement](#).

### **D1 Determining interventions**

4.32 The Council ensures that decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options, indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and highlighting associated risks, in order to secure best value regardless of the service delivery method. This is combined with considering feedback from citizens and service users about proposed service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts. This is achieved by:

- Embedding the pursuit of value for money into all of the Council's decision-making processes.
- Frequently undertaking reviews to provide assurance that value for money services are being provided.
- Using residents' and other stakeholders' views with high level analysis of the equalities impact to shape proposals in the [Medium Term Financial Plan](#).

The process for developing the [Inclusive Economic Strategy](#) was agreed by Cabinet in December 2021. It used a three-stage process (economic review, economic statement and conversation on strategy development) which was considered by the [Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in March 2022. It is owned and developed by the County Durham Economic Partnership through extensive public and stakeholder engagement and was adopted by Durham County Council in December 2022. Following adoption an extensive and focused Delivery Plan was developed, again through partners and stakeholders, to drive transformative actions to implement the IES, and the strategy was adopted by Cabinet [November 2023](#).

## D2 Planning interventions

4.33 The Council's arrangements for planning the interventions for the achievement of its intended outcomes are:

- Establishing and implementing, through the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) and [Medium Term Financial Plan](#) monitoring, robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets.
- Engaging with internal and external stakeholders, through participative budgeting and other consultation techniques, in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered.
- Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks, through the [partnership governance framework](#) and the [Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#).
- Ensuring, through the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) and business continuity planning, that arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances.
- Determining, during the development of the [County Durham Vision 2035](#) and the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) how the performance of services and projects will be measured, and linking these arrangements to a locally led [Performance Management Framework](#), which ensures that attention is focused on Council priorities.
- Using key target indicators in areas where improvements can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the Council and its partners.
- Comparing performance with that of other Councils using a recognised, online tool.
- Undertaking, through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, in-depth, evidence-based reviews of services, the findings of which are outlined in the [Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report](#).
- Preparing budgets in accordance with the [County Durham Vision 2035](#), the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) and the [Medium Term Financial Plan](#).
- Informing medium- and long-term resource planning by determining, through Cabinet in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, the general budget strategy and issuing annual guidelines to Members and Chief Officers on preparing: -
  - A detailed revenue budget for the following year and the [MTFP](#).
  - The Capital Programme.
  - The timetable for developing and agreeing the Council's revenue and capital budget.
- The Business, Economy, Regeneration Strategy Recovery Group (a subgroup of the County Durham Economic Partnership) assesses and



addresses the economic implications of the pandemic to help businesses to restart and grow the economy.

- The process for [Managing Change in County Durham's Towns and Villages](#) to deliver the [Town Investment Plan](#) was set out in a report to Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2021. This includes interventions through Masterplans and Targeted Delivery Plans, and the development and alignment of funding programmes to facilitate change and improvement.
- The [Council House Building Programme](#), phase 2 of which includes the Council's strategy for the development of new council homes within the rural west of the County.
- The council's approach to planning, performance, delivering major projects and change to help secure Value for Money aims to deliver increased value for money by further strengthening the alignment of the processes for service planning, financial planning, performance management and service development.
- The approach to the management, monitoring and performance of [Major Programmes and Projects](#) aims to provide assurance that appropriate standards and controls exist to ensure programmes and projects are set up for success, are delivered consistently across the service area and that within the delivery framework there are adequate and appropriate levels of control, challenge, and intervention. Key governance features of the approach include a Major Programmes Board and a Portfolio Office.
- The [Youth Justice Plan 2023/24](#), as required by the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, includes areas for improvement, areas of uncertainty including changes in service demand, and concerns from partners about resources and capacity, which may impact on the ability to deliver the plan.

### **D3 Optimising achievement of intended outcomes**

4.34 The Council optimises the achievement of its outcomes by:

- Developing, through the [Medium Term Financial Plan](#), a financial framework in line with the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) to deliver policy initiatives within available resources and aligned to priority outcomes.
- Developing the budgeting process in line with Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, to ensure that it is all-inclusive, and takes into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term.
- Ensuring, through the development of the [MTFP](#) and [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) that partners and stakeholders have a clear view of the Council's priorities, targets and financial plans over the forthcoming period of four years.

- Seeking, through the [Social Value in Procurement 2023 - 2025 Policy Statement](#), to implement procedures that protect the long-term interests of the communities we represent, in line with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.
- Instructing bidding organisations bring this policy to the attention of bidders.
- The Shareholder Working Group comprising, the Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant portfolio holders, the Chief Financial Officer and Monitoring Officer and Head of Finance, oversees performance and proposals in relation to the Council's companies. Shareholder decisions rest with Cabinet or the relevant Corporate Director in accordance with the Officer Scheme of Delegation within the [Constitution](#).
- The Company Governance Group supports the work of the Shareholder Working Group with oversight of the Council's companies' governance arrangements, including consideration of the strategic approach to, and structure of, its' companies and joint venture arrangements. The Group seeks to ensure that officers who work with, or who are appointed as, directors of Council companies understand their roles and responsibilities, identify and manage conflicts of interests, and provide resilience in the Council's resourcing of companies. Company governance training is included in the Council's Workforce Learning and Development Plan. Updates on the Group's work are periodically presented to the Corporate Management Team.
- The [Destination Management Plan 2023-2030](#) is a shared statement of intent to manage the visitor economy in the county over a stated period of time, setting out the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take and the apportionment of resources.
- The [UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan](#), developed through the County Durham Economic Partnership arrangements with a wide programme of engagement with a broad range of local and regional stakeholders, identified local challenges and opportunities which were used to inform and prioritise activities that should be funded using UKSPF.

***Principle E: Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it***

Why this is important

4.35 The Council needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications, and mindset, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve its intended outcomes

within the specified periods. It must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which the Council operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of the leadership and of individual staff members. Leadership in the Council is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.

#### How we meet this principle

4.36 Key governance documents supporting Principle E include:

[Constitution](#) – Decision Making; The Executive; Financial Procedure Rules; Officer Scheme of Delegations; Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements; Protocol for Questions by the Public to Members of the Executive (Council Procedure Rules).

[Other](#) – [Apprenticeship Strategy 2022 - 2025](#); [Area Action Partnerships](#) Terms of Reference; Attendance Management Policy; Capital Strategy; Durham Leadership and Management Development Programme; Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy; Learning, Development and Support Programme for Members; [Workforce Strategy 2024 - 2027](#); Property Strategy.

### **E1 Developing the Council's capacity**

4.37 The Council strives to maintain the continuing effectiveness of its operations, performance and use of assets through:

- The Council's Inspire Programme, which seeks to enable flexible working through digital and mobile technology, make our workspaces more cost effective and productive, and support collaboration between teams across the organisation.
- Establishing a corporate landlord service delivery model for asset management, overseen by the Head of Corporate Property and Land.
- Regularly monitoring key areas of performance, including the condition, suitability, sufficiency and accessibility of property to ensure that best use is made of assets in terms of service benefit, financial benefit and value for money.
- Setting out in the Property Strategy the main principles to ensure that opportunities to share the use of property are identified, and to make sure that assets are fit for purpose, cost effective and used to support regeneration and economic development.

- Consulting local communities and partners, where appropriate, about alternative methods of continuing to provide front line services.
- Advising Cabinet on the Capital Programme through the Member Officer Working Group for Capital, which is responsible for scrutinising capital budget revisions and monitoring progress on schemes.
- Formally reflecting on experiences and using learning to strengthen capacity and capability.
- The [Cyber Security Strategy 2022 - 2025](#) and the actions contained within, which aim to further strengthen and secure the Council from cyber threats by increasing security awareness throughout our workforce, investing in our systems and digital infrastructure, deterring our adversaries, and developing a wide range of responses, from basic cyber hygiene to the most sophisticated defences.
- A hybrid working model, introduced in February 2022 following the cessation of Covid Plan B measures, which minimises the potential number of employees in the workplace at any one time, whilst also supporting our future direction of travel to work more flexibly and smarter as an organisation.
- The [Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025](#) sets out how the property portfolio will support the Council's corporate priorities and objectives and provides direction for the management of the portfolio during the life of the plan, allowing services to concentrate on their operational delivery.
- There are eight [customer access points](#) across the county, and service levels align with reduced post-Covid19 demand and a shift to non-face-to-face contact channels, enabled by a significant e-enabling and digitisation programme that was required whilst access was restricted during the pandemic.

4.38 The Council strives to improve the management of its funding and resources to ensure that they are allocated and utilised in a way that realises outcomes effectively and efficiently. This is achieved through:

- The Inspiring Change element of the Inspire Programme, which seeks to invest in new IT systems, modernise and simplify business processes, redesign services in localities to meet community needs, and introduce more commercial activity to support social objectives.
- The policy and process, developed through the Community Assets Steering Group, to oversee new and existing asset transfers.
- Using benchmarking data from statutory returns to inform programmes of VFM reviews and savings options in various service areas in order to ensure that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently.
- Using data from commercial benchmarking clubs, to facilitate meaningful comparisons with other Councils.

- Including in the [County Durham Partnership](#) a range of key public, private and voluntary sector organisations that work together to improve the quality of life for the people within County Durham.
- Managing, within service groupings, informal, collaborative working arrangements with external organisations.
- The [Digital Strategy](#), which sets out the Council's digital ambitions for the County and provides a framework within which these ambitions can be delivered in line with the objectives of the Council Vision.
- The council has published its [Cyber Security Strategy](#) to address the growing threats from cybercrime and recent high-profile attacks. The strategy aligns with the broader Government cyber security goals, which aim to significantly enhance the protection of critical government functions and residents using services by 2025 and ensure resilience across the public sector by 2030.
- The [Apprenticeship Strategy 2022 - 2025](#), which aims to identify opportunities for new and existing employees to support workforce development and planning.
- The [Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2022-2024](#), which uses local intelligence and data to identify key priorities and actions that will improve the council's overall sufficiency of placement provision for children and young people who can no longer live with their family.

4.39 The Council maintains an effective workforce plan, through the Organisational Development Strategy, to enhance the strategic allocation of resources.

## **E2 Developing the capability of the Council's leadership and other individuals**

4.40 The Council ensures that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained. This is achieved by:

- Setting out in the [Constitution](#) how the Executive is made up and how appointments to this committee are made.
- Electing the Leader under the terms of the [Constitution](#), and making appointments to a number of committees with various regulatory and scrutiny responsibilities.
- Nominating, through the Leader, nine other councillors, including a Deputy Leader, with specific responsibilities to form the Cabinet.
- Allocating, through the Leader under the terms of the [Constitution](#), roles and responsibilities to individual members and the Executive Committee as a whole.

- Supporting the above arrangements with a number of formal member and officer working groups.

4.41 The Council makes a clear distinction between the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the Council in the [Constitution](#), which is published on the website.

4.42 The Council clearly defines in the [Constitution](#) the respective roles of the leader and the chief executive, whereby the chief executive leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority.

4.43 The Council continually seeks to develop the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks. This is achieved by:

- Ensuring, through the Learning, Development and Support Programme for Members and the Durham Learning and Development System, that members and staff are provided with induction training tailored to their role and individual training and development plans.
- Ensuring, through the Performance and Development Review scheme and the Member Development Programme, that members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis.
- The Durham Leadership and Management Development Programme, which includes several mandatory courses, including coaching as a management style and mental health awareness for managers. Other courses are linked to corporate priorities, management skills and personal development.
- A portal on the Durham Learning and Development system, which brings together valuable resources and information for managers. Induction for new managers includes, mandatory training, links to policies, useful documentation and guidance, briefings and useful contacts.
- Ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external.
- Promoting excellence in learning through membership of the North East Public Service Academy.
- The Durham Leadership Way programme, which outlines the expectations of leaders and managers together with a development and support offer.

4.44 The Council encourages public participation by:

- Administering 14 multi-agency [Area Action Partnerships \(AAPs\)](#) that enable local people and organisations to comment on how services are provided.
- Inviting members of the public to attend Council meetings.
- Including a protocol for member of the public wishing to ask a question to the Executive.
- Providing the opportunity for residents, communities, businesses and employees to comment and influence [the Council Plan](#) (Its objectives, priorities and how it is to be achieved) through [consultation periods](#) both interactively through the councils website and public engagement with [Area Action Partnerships \(AAPs\)](#).

4.45 The Council ensures that the leadership's own effectiveness is considered and that leaders are open to constructive feedback from scrutiny, peer review and inspections by:

- Monitoring the decisions of the Executive through the [Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board](#), which has the power to:-
  - “call-in” decisions which have been made but not implemented; and
  - recommend that their decisions are reconsidered.
- Consulting the [Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board](#) on forthcoming decisions or the development of policy.
- Assessing the skills required by members and officers through personal development plans and making a commitment to develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively.
- Developing skills on a continuing basis, through implementation of the Learning, Development and Support Programme for Members, to improve performance, including the ability to scrutinise and challenge and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed.

4.46 The Council strives to maintain effective arrangements to meet employees' needs in terms of training, development, health and wellbeing through:

- The Inspiring People element of the Inspire Programme, which seeks to invest widely in staff training and development, review the Council's HR policies and procedures, adopt new values and behaviours, empower people to be advocates of change, and identify talent and succession planning.
- Assessing the skills required by officers through personal development plans and making a commitment to develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively.

- Managing the performance and development of employees through an ongoing appraisal process.
- Supporting employees through the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy and the emergency Human Resources Policy. Absence management arrangements and enhanced family and compassionate leave provisions focus on rehabilitation through the Attendance Management Policy with assistance from Occupational Health.
- Supporting employees through change processes with confidential counselling services through the Employee Assistance Programme.
- A Wellbeing Portal provides support and guidance for managers and non-management employees in relation to mental health and wellbeing.
- The facilitation of staff network groups, administered by the Equality and Diversity and HR Teams and chaired by volunteers, to provide an opportunity for people across the council to meet with others, share and discuss experiences, help shape the working environment, arrange events and offer support to other staff.

***Principle F: Managing risks, data and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management***

Why this is important

4.47 The Council needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision-making activities.

4.48 A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery, and accountability.

4.49 It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny is in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.



## How we meet this principle

4.50 Key governance documents supporting Principle F include:

[Constitution](#) – Councillor Call for Action Procedure (Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules); Decision Making; Financial Procedure Rules; Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements.

Other – Capital Strategy; [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#); [Data Protection Policy](#); [Data Quality Policy](#); Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework; [Internal Audit Strategy, Charter and Plan 2024/25](#); [Medium Term Financial Plan](#); [Performance Management Framework](#); [performance reports](#); [Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#); service plans.

Professional Codes – CIPFA \* Code on a Prudential Framework for Local Authority Capital Finance; CIPFA Financial Management Code; CIPFA \* Statement on the Role of Head of Internal Audit; Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption, 2014; National Audit Office Code of Practice on Value for Money; Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

\* Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy

## **F1 Managing risk**

4.51 The Council recognises that risk management is an integral part of all activities and decision making as set out in the [Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#), which defines key roles and responsibilities and is reviewed annually, to maintain robust, integrated and effective risk management arrangements. Council-owned companies and joint venture arrangements are provided with strategic and financial guidance and support and are required to report regularly on performance.

## **F2 Managing performance**

4.52 The Council ensures that the delivery of strategies, projects and services is effectively monitored by:

- Setting out in service plans a detailed schedule of actions, which are assigned to responsible officers and incorporated into, and monitored through, the corporate and service performance management arrangements.
- Monitoring performance and ensuring that effective arrangements are put in place to deal with any failures in service delivery through the Council's Cabinet.

- Providing assurance through quarterly [performance reports](#) to Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and all scrutiny committees by way of senior management performance clinics during the year. Reports include service-specific dashboards showing actual and target performance and, to enhance transparency, they also include national, North East and nearest neighbour comparisons where relevant data is available.
- Undertaking key in-depth evidence-based reviews through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- Overseeing quality assurance developments in Children's Services and maintaining strategic oversight of children's services through a Quality Improvement Board.
- Operating a locally led [Performance Management Framework](#) that links to the [County Durham Vision 2035](#) and the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) and ensures that attention is focused on Council priorities.
- Undertaking benchmarking exercises by comparing performance with that of other Councils using a recognised, online tool.
- Seeking assurance on the quality of services from external, independent sources.
- Providing update reports, on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement, to Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Full Council.

4.53 The Council endeavours to make the right decisions for the benefit of its stakeholders by:

- Supporting the Council's decision-making processes with a [Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#).
- Implementing arrangements to ensure that decisions are based on relevant, clear, objective analysis and advice; comply with legal requirements; and take account of the Council's financial, social and environmental position and outlook.
- Including in the Council's stated principles for decision making the giving of reasons for decisions and supporting them with references to legal or other professional advice and stating the potential implications in terms of finance, staffing, risk, human rights and several other factors.
- Maintaining an overview and scrutiny function through which members robustly scrutinise, challenge and debate proposed policies and objectives to make decision-making processes transparent, accountable and inclusive.
- Enabling members to bring matters of local concern to the attention of the Council through the scrutiny process using Councillor Call for Action procedure.

4.54 The Council seeks to ensure consistency between specification stages and post implementation reporting by aligning each new iteration of the [Council Plan](#), the primary corporate planning document, with the cyclical medium term financial planning process. Successive Medium Term Financial Plans, incorporating revenue and capital budgets, set out how priorities will be resourced. Subsequent final outturn reports provide an analysis of the closing position with an account of variations from budgeted income and expenditure.

### **F3 Robust internal control**

4.55 The Council seeks to align the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives, as well as evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis and ensuring that any recommendations for improvement are implemented. This is achieved by:

- Developing, maintaining and delivering an [Internal Audit Strategy, Charter and Plan 2024/25](#).
- Including in strategic risk management reports and internal audit reports the potential implications for achieving the Council's objectives.
- Reporting annually to [Audit Committee](#), through the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment.
- Undertaking a self-assessment against both the principles of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of Head of Internal Audit and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), approved by [Audit Committee](#).
- Undertaking internal annual reviews of the effectiveness of internal audit and an external assessment once every five years as required by the PSIAS.
- Undertaking a review of the effectiveness of the Council's corporate governance arrangements in line with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework.
- Maintaining an [Audit Committee](#), which is independent of the Executive and accountable to the Full Council, to;
  - provide a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment;
  - advise both the Council and the Cabinet on audit and governance issues in order to provide independent and effective assurance about the adequacy of financial management and reporting, and the management of other processes required to achieve the organisation's corporate and service objectives;
  - make recommendations, which are listened to and acted upon.

4.56 The Council ensures that effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place by maintaining a dedicated Corporate Fraud Team to support its counter fraud arrangements through the [Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy](#), and working towards compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption, 2014.

## **F4 Managing data**

4.57 The Council ensures that effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including decision making and processes to safeguard personal data. This is achieved by:

- Managing data in accordance with the [Data Protection Policy](#), Data Quality Policy, Records Management Policy and various data sharing protocols, with oversight by the Information Governance Group, to ensure that the arrangements in place are effective.
- Designating the Corporate Director of Resources as the Senior Information Risk Officer to strengthen the Council's arrangements for maintaining good-quality information.
- Holding regular meetings with the designated Data Protection Officer, Head of Digital and Customer Services and the Council's designated Caldicott Guardian.
- Providing mandatory Data Protection Act e-learning training for all relevant employees.
- Maintaining strong data protection arrangements regarding data sharing with other bodies through standardised subject access requests, a privacy impact assessment process, data sharing agreements and a data sharing register.
- Undertaking a rolling programme of audits to check the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring.

## **F5 Strong public financial management**

4.58 The Council aims to ensure that financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance. This is combined with seeking to ensure that well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls. Investing resources in line with long-term outcomes and priorities as described in the [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#), which contains a set of actions with proposed outcomes.

- Making the links with priorities and outcomes detailed in the Council's Budget Report.
- Seeking to comply with CIPFA's Code on a Prudential Framework for Local Authority Capital Finance, subject to external audit review.
- Undertaking, through the Council's Internal Audit Team, independent assessments against CIPFA's Financial Management Code.
- Undertaking value for money self-assessments against the National Audit Office Code of Practice, with input from Internal Audit, and review by External Audit.
- Ensuring delivery of transformational change while maintaining service delivery through the [Medium Term Financial Plan](#) process.
- Gaining independent assurance of value for money from the External Auditor.

***Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability***

Why this is important

4.59 Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the Council plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.

How we meet this principle

4.60 Key governance documents supporting Principle G include:

[Annual Governance Statement 2022/23](#); [Statement of Accounts Year End 31 Mar 23](#); [Local Code of Corporate Governance](#); [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#); [partnership governance framework](#); [Transparency and Accountability webpage](#).

**G1 Implementing good practice in transparency**

4.61 Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate.

4.62 The Council aims to strike a proper balance between providing the right amount of information in a manner that is transparent and enhances public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and which readers can interpret. This is achieved by:

- Maintaining a website that is designed to make it easy for users to find information and includes a [Transparency and Accountability webpage](#) to comply with the [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#).
- Publishing information on the website about services provided, land and assets owned by the Council, organisational structures and salaries, counter fraud, how money is spent and how services are bought.

## **G2 Implementing good practices in reporting**

4.63 The Council is committed to reporting to stakeholders at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources in a timely and understandable way, while ensuring members and senior management own the results reported. This is achieved by:

- Developing the [Annual Statement of Accounts](#) incorporating the [Annual Governance Statement](#).
- Publishing the [Annual Statement of Accounts](#) on the website, following approval by [Audit Committee](#), taking account of the views of the External Auditor, in line with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- Publishing the [Audit Completion Report](#) and Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report, which provides assurance on the Council's system of financial management.
- Including with published information, the minutes of meetings approving reports to ensure that members and senior management own the results reported.

4.64 The Council seeks to ensure that robust arrangements are maintained for assessing and reporting on the effectiveness of its own governance arrangements, as well as those of related organisations. This is achieved by:

- Developing and maintaining a [Local Code of Corporate Governance](#), approved by [Audit Committee](#), setting out how the Council will meet the principles of good governance.
- Assessing the Council's corporate governance arrangements against its [Local Code of Corporate Governance](#), led by the Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the directors and heads of service.
- Ensuring, through the [partnership governance framework](#), that the corporate governance arrangements of partners and jointly managed or shared service organisations are consistent with the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance.
- Reporting the outcome of the corporate governance review, including planned actions for improvement, in the [Annual Governance Statement](#), approved by the Corporate Management Team and the

[Audit Committee](#), and signed by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive.

4.65 The Council seeks to ensure that it produces financial statements on a consistent and timely basis, in accordance with Financial Reporting Standards, in a way that enables comparison with other, similar organisations.

### **G3 Assurance and effective accountability**

4.66 The Council seeks to provide continuous assurance with regard to its arrangements for governance and internal control by:

- Operating an Internal Audit service, with direct access to members, as a key part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements with the primary aim of supporting the Council to achieve its objectives by helping services to identify, assess, and manage risks, which may prevent, or hinder objectives being achieved effectively.
- Ensuring that agreed recommendations made by Internal Audit and External Audit are acted upon by tracking and reporting their progress to [Audit Committee](#).
- Complying with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2019).
- Applying the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards within all of procedures of the Internal Audit Service.

4.67 The Council welcomes peer challenge, independent reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and seeks to ensure that recommendations are implemented.

4.68 The Council seeks to gain assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties by:

- Managing relationships with partners through the [partnership governance framework](#), which seeks to ensure that:
  - members are clear about their roles and responsibilities;
  - there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership;
  - representatives both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions.

4.69 The Council gives due recognition, through its annual Inspiring People awards, for outstanding achievements by teams and individuals.

## **5 Monitoring and Review**

- 5.1. The [Audit Committee](#) and the [Standards Committee](#) are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the various aspects of the Council's corporate governance arrangements.
- 5.2. The [Audit Committee](#) is responsible for the Council's arrangements relating to:
- Monitoring and reviewing the risk, control and governance processes, and associated assurance processes to ensure internal control systems are effective and that policies and practices are in compliance with statutory and other regulations and guidance.
  - Approving the Council's Accounts prior to approval by the County Council.
  - Reviewing a draft of this Code of Corporate Governance and recommending any amendments required before it is considered for approval by the Full Council.
  - External audit and internal audit.
  - Risk Management.
  - Making recommendations concerning relevant governance aspects of the [Constitution](#).
  - Reviewing the effectiveness of Internal Audit.
- 5.3. Each year the Council is required to publish a Governance Statement. This process is managed by the Resources Management Team and overseen by the [Audit Committee](#) who is responsible for approving it. The [Annual Governance Statement](#) provides an overall assessment of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and an appraisal of the key controls in place to manage the Council's principal governance risks, together with proposed improvements that will be made. This governance review process helps inform any amendments required to this Code of Corporate Governance.
- 5.4. The [Annual Governance Statement](#) will be published as part of the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts and will be reviewed by our External Auditors as part of their annual audit process.
- 5.5. The [Standards Committee](#) is responsible for promoting high ethical standards across the Council, overview of the Member and Officer Codes and other relevant protocols.
- 5.6. These two Committees will ensure that the Council's governance arrangements are kept under continual review through,



- Reports prepared by officers with responsibility for aspects of this Code.
- The work of Internal Audit.
- External Audit opinion.
- Other review agencies and Inspectorates.
- Opinion from the Council's Statutory Officers.

5.7. The Council also has a [Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board](#) and five Overview and Scrutiny Committees who support the work of the Executive and the Council as a whole. They allow a greater involvement in Council business by involving non-councillors from the wider public sector, and voluntary and community groups to help them in their work, and also work with Partners, including the [County Durham Partnership](#). They may also be consulted by the Executive or the Council on forthcoming decisions or the development of policy. The terms of reference of the [Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board](#) and its Committees are described in the [Constitution](#).

5.8. Within their terms of reference, the [Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board](#) and Overview and Scrutiny Committees will:

- review and/or scrutinise decisions made, or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.
- make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council and/or the Cabinet in connection with the discharge of any functions; consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants.
- exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Executive in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.
- work to ensure that communities are engaged in the scrutiny process; and consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options; and
- promote equality and diversity across all of its work and the work of the County Council.

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**Council**

**22 January 2025**

**Overview and Scrutiny – Six Monthly Update**



**Helen Bradley, Director of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Councillor Rob Crute - Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide information to County Council on the activity of overview and scrutiny for the six month period June to November 2024.

**Executive summary**

- 2 It has previously been agreed that a six month update on the activity of overview and scrutiny is considered by Council, in addition to the Overview and Scrutiny Annual report which is submitted to Council in July/September each year.
- 3 This update sets out the approach that scrutiny has been taking since the County Council elections in May 2021, regular matters which feature in the committee work programmes and highlights some items which have formed part of more in-depth scrutiny over the six month period to November 2024.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 4 Council is recommended to:
  - (a) note the information on overview and scrutiny activity which has taken place in the six month period June to November 2024.

## Background

- 5 As a result of statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny arrangements in local authorities published in 2019, the County Council agreed a six-monthly report of overview and scrutiny activity be submitted to council to assist in the communication of scrutiny's role and purpose.
- 6 This update report highlights some of the work scrutiny has undertaken in the six month period to November 2024 and complements the annual report which is submitted to council each year.
- 7 At the annual meeting of Council in May 2024, Cllr Rob Crute was re-appointed as Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) and Cllr Chris Lines re-appointed as Vice Chair of the Board. In their role as the strategic driver of the overview and scrutiny function, they have encouraged an inclusive and transparent approach to carrying out scrutiny.
- 8 Contributing to policy development is a key task for scrutiny and the scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs have a clear ambition to increase activity in this field.
- 9 Overview and scrutiny has continued the practice of meeting with members of the Executive regularly. This approach was recommended in the statutory guidance issued in 2019 and it was acknowledged that Durham County Council has a strong record of sharing information with the Executive.
- 10 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) oversees and co-ordinates the work of overview and scrutiny committees. Five thematic overview and scrutiny committees scrutinise the following themes:
  - Adults, Wellbeing and Health
  - Children and Young People
  - Economy and Enterprise
  - Environment and Sustainable Communities
  - Safer and Stronger Communities
- 11 Durham County Council's overview and scrutiny function has embedded the four principles of good scrutiny in all the work it does. These principles, originally developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, inform and shape scrutiny work. They state that overview and scrutiny should:

- Provide constructive critical friend challenge
  - Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
  - Be led by independent minded people who take responsibility for their role
  - Drive improvement in public services
- 12 Scrutiny committees undertake regular monitoring of budget and performance reports, receive updates on previous reviews and undertake light touch and in depth review activity.
- 13 All scrutiny members have received the corporate induction training following the May 2021 elections. This has been supplemented by bespoke scrutiny training delivered by the Scrutiny team. Overview and scrutiny members have also had the opportunity to take up training provided by the LGA in collaboration with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and the North East Regional Employers Organisation.
- 14 Comprehensive work programmes are developed by scrutiny committees each year and this update highlights only some of the work they carry out.

### **Scrutiny Committee Activity**

- 15 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB)

Chair: Councillor Rob Crute,  
Vice Chair: Councillor Chris Lines

- (a) Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP 15) 2025/26 – 2028/29

COSMB has a constitutional role in assisting Cabinet in the development of the council's annual budget. The Council is operating in a period of significant financial uncertainty with concerns about the impact of inflation and fuel and energy prices. The Board continues to be updated by the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services and will consider the impact of the local government financial settlement on the council's budget and MTFP forecasts. The Board considered its first report on 3 October 2024 which included an update on the delivery of those savings agreed within MTFP14; further information on additional budget pressures for 2025/26 and beyond and the review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26.

A further report was considered on 9 December 2024 which updated financial planning assumptions for the MTFP15 process following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Budget

Statement on 30 October 2024. The report included details of the further savings that could be considered to help to balance the budget for 2025/26 and beyond. These are subject to a second round of budget consultation from 6 December 2024 to 17 January 2025 and which will build on the first phase of consultation which closed on 1 November 2024. The feedback from Phase 1 of the budget consultation was also considered by the Board at its 9 December 2024 meeting.

(b) North East Combined Authority Update

The Board considered an update report on the establishment and governance arrangements for the North East Combined Authority at a special meeting on 28 October 2024. The report set out the key representation which the County Council has on the NECA Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Standards and Audit Committees. The Council previously had effective relationships with the former North East Combined Authority covering Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland Councils and also the Joint Transport Committee which covered the footprint of the former NECA and North of Tyne Combined Authorities. Council representation on both bodies ensured a regular discourse and opportunity for feedback between the CAs and the Council's own Scrutiny arrangements. The Board sought these arrangements to be replicated and built on under NECA and a series of initial NECA decisions which would deliver key investments into County Durham were identified within the report.

(c) RIPA Annual Report 2022

The Board considered a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services which provided information about the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period of 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The report also presented proposed changes on the Council's Corporate RIPA Guidance as part of the annual review for comment by the Board prior to its consideration by Cabinet. In considering the report, the Board noted the detailed RIPA training provided to responsible officers as well as awareness training to wider tier 4 and 5 managers.

16 Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (AWH OSC)

Chair: Councillor Veronica Andrews  
Vice Chair: Councillor Matt Johnson

(a) Health Protection and Assurance Annual Report

The Committee considered the annual health protection and assurance annual report which included information regarding screening activities, immunisation programmes, outbreaks and communicable diseases, strategic regulation interventions and protection from environmental hazards. Members noted the sustained performance across childhood vaccinations and to improve the take up of screening programmes including bowel screening. The Committee has examined the work of the Local Resilience Forum and the multi-agency approach to examining and mitigating against risks to public health associated with disease, infection and adverse weather conditions.

(b) CQC Assessment of Local Authority Adult Social Care

The Committee has previously examined the Council's self-assessment document produced by the service in preparation for the CQC assessment of Adult Social Care. Members received an update of the outcome of the CQC Assessment process following the onsite inspection in May 2024 which included an interview with the Chair of the AWHOSC. The results of the assessment gave the County Council an assessment of "Good" with a number of areas of good practice noted. An inspection improvement plan which addresses those areas of improvements identified by the assessment has been developed and this was considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 18 November 2024. This will inform future work programme priority activity for the AWHOSC.

(c) Winter Planning Assurance 2024-25

The Committee has considered the joint winter planning arrangements for 2024/25 which covers health, social care, other key service provision during cold weather and surge periods. The report and presentation to the AWHOSC on 18 November 2024 highlighted partnership plans that have been developed to prevent excess winter deaths and cold related ill health whilst also managing demand on health and social care systems and related services over the winter season. Members continue to seek assurances around health and social care planning, system resilience and the wider work undertaken by partners including Civil Contingency and local resilience forum, local community and voluntary group provision such as hot meals provision; befriending and community activity including the County Durham Together provision. Welfare and financial planning and support have also been examined as part of the wider determinants of health alongside housing support, winter maintenance and

communications and advice provision. A review of the effectiveness of winter planning assurance arrangements will be brought to the Committee in March 2025.

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

Chair Councillor Anne Reed  
Vice Chair Councillor Cathy Hunt

(a) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Update

The Committee considered an update on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities which also provided a summary of the recent Ofsted and CQC inspection of the Local SEND Partnership including a timeline of activity and areas of focus. The inspection highlighted many areas of strength and good practice. The outcome of the inspection identified four areas where improvement was required. An outline of the next steps following the inspection focused on a draft multi-agency action plan which was due to be submitted to Ofsted by the end of October.

In addition to the information on the recent inspection the update provided information on the current demand and timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plan assessments. The report also highlighted the work undertaken to develop a speech and language strategy for early years.

The committee requested that the action plan come back to committee for members to consider the progress the action plan. Members acknowledged the need for de-escalation of the increasing demand of EHCP cases received. The committee supported the work undertaken on the draft speech and language strategy.

(b) Home to School Transport Services Update

Following a further report to Cabinet on Home to School Transport Services being considered in July 2024, the committee received an update report to its September 2024 meeting. The report highlighted priority areas and included information on Durham County Council's concessionary scheme, a simplified process for providing travel budgets for pupils with special educational needs and procurement updates. Information was given on the current budget position which had seen expenditure double since 2019/20. Increases in costs were expected to



continue due to the impact of inflation on contract costs and growing demand from pupils with SEND.

The Committee also agreed that further reports on the Home to School Transport Service recommendations be brought forward to the CYPOSC.

(c) Vaccinations, Best Start in Life, and Family Health Services

The Committee's meeting on 8 November 2024 was a themed session with reports and presentations considered in respect of the progress made in addressing the Maternity and Childhood Vaccinations Best start in Life priorities, Tobacco Dependency in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding; the 0-25 Family Health Service workforce and service delivery across County Durham provided by Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust.

The committee noted the broad assurances that effective partnerships and processes were in place to deliver all maternity, childhood and adolescent vaccinations to all County Durham residents. The committee supports the efforts to increase access to smoking cessation and support for pregnant women and their families and supports the campaign for the normalisation of breastfeeding within our communities. The committee also noted the content of the 0-25 Family Health Services report especially the information given on the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme.

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

Chair Councillor Sam Zair

Vice Chair Councillor Angela Surtees

(a) Strategic Place Plans

The committee in early 2024 when considering a report on Masterplan activity had been informed that the Authority going forward would be revising its approach through the creation of Strategic Place Plans (SPPs) in line with the principles and priorities of the Inclusive Economic Strategy. The members of the committee highlighted the need for Overview and Scrutiny to be kept updated on the development of this new approach and also progress in relation to the pilot areas.

This resulted in the committee considering a report and presentation which provided members with detail of the pilot

approach to SPPs, the Spennymoor case study and its alignment with the SPP model and outlined the delivery of future SPPs and the factors influencing the order of delivery. The Service Grouping requested members thoughts and comments in relation to the approach and factors identified for consideration in prioritising the development of plans for the remaining towns in the county. This resulted in an Overview and Scrutiny response being prepared and shared with the Service Grouping which detailed members comments in relation to factors for consideration in prioritisation, the engagement process, the development, and rollout of future SPPs and current pilot areas. The Overview and Scrutiny response will be used to further development the future SPP model and approach.

(b) Draft County Durham Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan

The Committee has had significant involvement in the development of the draft County Durham Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan. This involvement commenced with a workshop held in July 2023 to which all Overview and Scrutiny members were invited and then subsequent meetings of the committee in December 2023 and April 2024 where members considered drafts of both the strategy and delivery plan. Members comments made at the workshop and meetings were formulated into Overview and Scrutiny responses which were shared with the Service Grouping to inform the future development of both the strategy and delivery plan for consideration by Cabinet and Council in July 2024.

However, at the July Council meeting the strategy and delivery plan were deferred due to members concerns at the proliferation of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the county, the lack of reference to DCC's approach to controlling the number of HMOs in the future and the potential use of Article 4 Directions. There were also concerns at the number of new builds and delivery timeframe for the Council House Build Programme. This resulted in the E&E OSC at the September meeting receiving two separate reports providing an update on the Council House Build Programme issue and the HMO issue. The comments made by members concerning both reports were formulated into an Overview and Scrutiny response which was shared with the Service Grouping to ensure that appropriate changes were made to both the strategy and plan, reflecting members concerns. The revised draft strategy and delivery plan were subsequently

presented to the E&E OSC on the 4 November, where members made further comments to inform the draft strategy and delivery plan which will be considered at a future Cabinet and Council meeting.

(c) Visits to FE Colleges

The Committee has previously received updates setting out the current progress in supporting skills development across the county. The last update to committee in March 2024 highlighted current funding opportunities presented by the County's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) allocation. It was suggested by the Service Grouping at this meeting that members of the committee may want to visit some of the FE Colleges within the County to see firsthand the range of training offered and the delivery of UK SPF commissioned skills programmes.

Arrangements were made for Overview and Scrutiny members to visit both New College Durham and East Durham College. The visits provided members with detail of the performance of both colleges, the investment within the colleges, the range of training provided, links with local employers, bespoke/niche training, working in collaboration with partners and future plans. In addition, those members who attended were given a tour of the facilities at both sites and had an opportunity to speak to students.

19 Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (E&S OSC)

Chair Councillor Bev Coult

Vice Chair Councillor Jonathan Elmer

(a) Leisure Transformation Programme

The Environment and Sustainable communities is the lead Overview and Scrutiny Committee for leisure and on the 23 September together with members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee they considered a report and presentation providing an update on the progress of the Leisure Transformation Programme for County Durham.

The members of both committees were presented with information providing a comprehensive overview of the Leisure Transformation Programme with a focus on key areas including: a summary of Cabinet decisions, background and context to the

programme; an overview of the leisure market in County Durham and comparisons; detail of costs across the programme; an explanation of the VAT exemption challenges pre-2023; detail of capital delivery to date; an overview of leisure costs to the council; explanation of site locations appraisals for new builds; overview of options and decisions in relation to the £10m MTFP commitment; detail of currently non-programmed sites and consultation work and outputs undertaken to date.

It was recognised within the report and presentation that the scope of the project had changed since its original development work in 2018 because of various external pressures. However, the programme is delivering substantial benefits to communities at a time when local authority budgets are under unprecedented pressure and many local authorities have taken the decision not to invest in leisure facilities.

(b) Resources and Waste Management Services in County Durham

At the July meeting of the committee members received a strategic overview and update on waste management services within County Durham. The committee receives regular update on the management of waste within the county and had requested that the report and presentation provide detail of: waste tonnages and levels of recycling within County Durham with comparative information on a regional and national basis; what we are doing to reduce contamination within kerbside recycling; an update on various waste campaigns including the successful Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and vapes; detail of the implications of the Environment Act, Resource and Waste Strategy, Simpler Recycling for the authority and an update on the Tees Valley Energy from Waste Project.

It was commented by members that the introduction of various legislation will impact significantly on the role of DCC with free weekly food waste collections for households, an expanded garden waste service and the potential to change the way we collect recycling from households. The committee therefore determined that they needed to be kept updated on work being undertaken within the service to meet the above requirements and have therefore included a further progress update on waste management to be considered at a special meeting in February 2025.

(c) Durham County Council Theatres and Cinemas

The committee included within its 2024/25 work programme an update on the management of Durham County Council's Theatres and Cinemas. The members included this update within the work programme as they were concerned at the decrease in attendance figures particularly in relation to DCC cinemas reported in the quarterly performance reports and wanted to know what action was being taken to increase attendance figures.

A report and presentation were provided to members of committee and also members of the Economy and Enterprise OSC at the November meeting. Members were provided with background to Durham's offer; national and regional context; detail of the offer at the Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and the Empire at Consett; detail of programme quality and balance across all three venues; engagement and participation including Schools' and Young People participation and event cinema pilot programmes; current pressures and detail of future approach and development.

The committee was informed that an Audience Development and Engagement Manager had been appointed to grow audiences and participation at the venues together with the introduction of demand-based pricing. The committee will continue to monitor the performance of the venues via the quarterly performance management reports.

20 Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SSC OSC)

Chair Councillor Phil Heaviside  
Vice Chair Councillor Joyce Charlton

(a) Hate Crime

In September 2024, the committee received a presentation from Durham Constabulary on hate crime. The refreshed Safe Durham Partnership Strategy 2024 -2029 focuses on hate crime and the committee wanted to better understand, recognise and support their communities in facing issues with hate crime.

Members were informed about the five forms of hate crime, what did and did not constitute a hate crime and the ways in which hate crime could be reported. When something was classified as a hate crime, the courts can impose tougher sentences under the

Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Criminal Justice Act 2003. Lesser crimes are dealt with by community resolution.

Members were advised the Joint Hate Crime Action Group works in partnership to agree and implement a co-ordinated approach to issues associated with hate crime including analysing intelligence, agreeing co-ordinated action to address patterns and trends. Members expressed their concern at the increasing prevalence of online hate crime which they felt had fuelled disturbances across the country during the summer.

(b) Combatting Drugs and Alcohol

Following a two-phase independent drugs review by Dame Carol Black in 2021/22 the government published a new drugs strategy. In County Durham, a three-year multi-agency delivery plan was developed based on the three objectives of the strategy and recommendations from a Joint Needs and Assets Assessment (JNAA). In October the SSC OSC received an update of the work of the County Durham and Darlington Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership and the Operational Group and Delivery Plan.

It was reported that Dame Carol Black funding had been vital to fund all work and the committee were informed that assurances for funding for a further year had been given. A refresh of the JNAA would take place to set the baseline for additional improvements to look at assets and identify any gaps. Over 3000 clients accessed support on an annual basis within County Durham which had improved better outcomes for service users.

Members were advised that service users could either detox at home by receiving the appropriate medication and being managed throughout or by entering residential rehabilitation centres. In response to a question about waiting times for detox, members were assured that waiting times were usually two to three weeks but it very much depended on whether a service user was ready to accept help and were committed to getting sober and or clean.

(c) Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

In October the Committee received an update on progress of the Safe Durham Partnership in meeting the statutory duties contained with the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

The UK Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST) had been refreshed in October 2024 but maintains the principles of the Four Ps (Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare) and focuses on preventing terrorism activity in the UK and protecting our interests overseas. The Prevent Strategy aims to reduce the threat to the UK of terrorism by preventing people from being drawn into terrorism.

The Prevent Duty' places a general duty on those authorities that have a role in protecting persons who are susceptible to being drawn into terrorism. to have due regard to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Channel is a key part of Prevent and is a multi agency approach to identify and support individuals vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. The role of Durham County Council was outlined for members. Members were pleased to learn that a lot of training was provided to schools and any agencies which worked with children.

## **Background Papers**

Reports and minutes (June – November 2024)

- Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
- Adults, Wellbeing and Health OSC
- Children and Young People OSC
- Economy and Enterprise OSC
- Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC
- Safer and Stronger Communities OSC

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities published in May 2019 stated that to maintain the interest of full council in the work of the scrutiny committee, authorities should take steps to ensure full council is informed of the work the scrutiny committee is doing.

The council must have regard to the statutory guidance when determining its scrutiny arrangements and have good reasons for not following any aspects of the guidance

### **Finance**

None

### **Consultation**

The statutory role of some scrutiny committees means that consultations are regularly considered.

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

All scrutiny reviews are subject to an equality impact assessment

### **Climate Change**

The council has declared a climate emergency and scrutiny committees such as the Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC receive regular reports on the commitment to contribute to reducing the causes of climate change and the implications of responding to and adapting to the inevitable impacts of climate change. Any climate change implications will be included in individual reports to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

Any crime and disorder implications will be included in individual reports to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**



None

**Risk**

None

**Procurement**

None

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