



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

**Date**      **Tuesday 18 June 2024**  
**Time**      **9.30 am**  
**Venue**     **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

**Items which are open to the Public and Press**  
**Members of the public can ask questions with the Chair's agreement,**  
**and if registered to speak.**

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Substitute Members
- 3 Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2024 (Pages 3 - 14)
- 4 Declarations of Interest
- 5 Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 4 - 2023/2024 - Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 15 - 18)
- 6 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24 - Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 19 - 40)
- 7 Refresh of the Work Programme 2024/25 for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board - Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 41 - 54)
- 8 Update in relation to Petitions - Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 55 - 64)
- 9 Notice of Key Decisions - Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Pages 65 - 74)

- 10 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

**Helen Bradley**  
Director of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
10 June 2024

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

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

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

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**Contact: Jackie Graham      Tel: 03000 269 704**

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## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 8 April 2024 at 9.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor R Crute (Chair)**

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

Councillors V Andrews, A Batey, J Charlton, J Elmer, O Gunn (Substitute) (substitute for S Deinali), P Heaviside, L Hovvels, M Johnson, P Jopling, C Lines (Vice-Chair), C Marshall, C Martin, J Miller, E Peeke, A Reed, K Shaw, A Simpson (Substitute) (substitute for B Coult), M Stead, A Sterling and A Surtees

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Coult, Deinali and Moist

### **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor Gunn for Councillor Deinali and Councillor Simpson for Councillor Coult.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **5 County Durham Partnership Update**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change that provided an update on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP). The report also included updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Interim Strategic Manager, Partnerships informed Members that the CDP event held in November 2023 was well attended celebrating 10 years of Public Health in the local authority and 10 years of the Health and Wellbeing Board. The event also coincided with the Lumiere festival returning to the County.

Members were also informed of the work around the fun and food programme, the advice in County Durham Partnership, the Poverty Action Steering Group and the development of Local Networks.

Councillor Charlton expressed concerns about numeracy and literacy skills within County Durham as we had highest number of people with low essential skills, and asked if we were letting people down in the education system. She requested further information around this. The Interim Strategic Manager referred to the targeted work taking place under the Prosperity Funding but would find out particular details and report back.

Councillor Surtees was pleased to see poverty being linked to the report but had concerns that funding was being cut back for the fun and food initiative by introducing a stricter criteria. She said some families would miss out, which was disappointing given we were trying to reduce the stigma around food poverty. She asked that the committee send a letter to the service expressing it's concerns around the application of DfE criteria when funding the fund and food programme initiatives and the risk that strict application of the criteria may mean children from "working poor" families miss out.

Councillor Gunn agreed that this issue affected every variant of County Durham and she found the change in the DfE formula appalling.

Councillor Hovvels said that it would discourage community and voluntary groups from applying for funding and would discriminate against children in the community. She said that it should be free for all, or subsidised, to make everyone feel equal. She went on to say that the community and voluntary sector were already under pressure and under funded so this would only add to the problem.

Councillor Marshall stated that the Child Poverty statistics in County Durham and the North East were shocking and made worse by political decisions within government. He said that there was shame in linking 'fun with food' as there was no fun for those not being able to feed their children. He referred to the many families in his community and the wider community who had welcomed children being fed in school holidays. He believed that there was a link between attainment in schools and the quality of meals being served in schools. He was concerned about the feedback on the quality of meals being provided in schools, even though costs had once again increased. These were additional costs to parents and the schools.

Moving on to AAPs Councillor Marshall was concerned about the ability of the new local networks being able to make local decisions. He was also concerned about the transition arrangements from AAPs to Local Networks and asked for some assurances about the local networks in respect of what they were and how would they work.

The Chair agreed that there was a history with the school meals provider. He referred to a recent Radio 4 interview which focussed on a school in London where school children were asked about school meals. The feedback was that it was poor quality, the portions were small and they were left hungry. This was the same situation being felt in County Durham and needed to be looked into further. He asked officers to liaise with the Chair of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Reed. He was also alarmed at the figure of the healthy weight of children from reception to year 6 and the lack of leisure facilities could not be helping to alleviate the problems.

On a more positive note, Councillor Reed said that there were some schools in the County who were sourcing their own ingredients and preparing food on site. They offered substantial meals that the children liked, with healthy options available and where allergies were taken into account. She was concerned about the number of take aways in close proximity to schools with some open early before the start of the school day.

The Interim Strategic Manager would take those points back to the Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement.

Councillor Elmer reported that as a governor at Brandon Primary School their meals were very good and to reduce food waste children could select their chosen meal at the beginning of each day. He would be interested in looking at what other schools did. He went on to ask how the County Durham Vision 2035 fed into the County Council Plan and how they informed each other, he also asked how people could get involved. The Interim Strategic Manager advised that the County Durham Vision was developed together with partner organisations and the public, and the Council Plan detailed the council's contribution towards achieving the objectives in the County Durham Vision. Partnership strategies, for example, the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, supported the delivery of priorities which involved local communities. She invited the councillor to contact her outside of the meeting if he had any further queries about membership of any of the thematic partnerships.

With regards to the letter from the Management Board to the service referred to earlier in the meeting, Councillor Batey was concerned that there would be

individuals would be identified who could participate in programmes so it would be hard to encourage people to apply when the criteria had changed.

Councillor Charlton said that some schools kept food to one side for those children who could not afford lunch so that they did not go home hungry. She was aware that schools were mainly cashless and provided cards, with any free school money being put directly onto the card and so not causing any stigma.

Councillor Surtees welcomed the discussion but did not want the point of the letter to be missed in that we were not able to do what we used to be able to as the funding had changed.

Councillor Gunn praised the good schools in County Durham with good teaching and TA staff who had faced challenging situations over the last few years but said that nourishment and nutrition was linked to learning. All schools were facing budget and staffing pressures but we did not want to let children down.

Councillor Hovvels asked if we could look into the lost funding for training for the voluntary sector as they were the grass roots of the community and this would have an impact across the region.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted and a letter be sent from the Chair to the DfE regarding the impact on changing the criteria for Free School Meals.

## **6 2023-24 Q3 Resources Revenue and Capital Budget**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided details of the forecast revenue and capital outturn budget position for the Resources service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of December 2023 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Finance Manager, Resources and Regeneration reported a quarter three forecast position showing that the service was forecasting a cash limit underspend of £1.434 million against a revised budget of £27.328 million. The Resources cash limit balance carried forward at 31 March 2024 was forecast to be circa £2.460 million and other earmarked reserves under the direct control of Resources Management Team (RMT) were forecast to total £5.701 million at 31 March 2024. The revised Resources capital budget was £4.746 million for 2023/24, with a total expenditure to 31 December 2023 of £3.096 million.

Councillor Marshall asked about consultancy costs in capital spend as over the last three years we have reduced staffing but as a result asked if we were passing these costs back to external contractors. The Finance Manager replied that this was the capital programme for Resources and the consultancy costs referred to mainly came under the Regeneration, Economy and Growth Service. He referred to the underspend in staffing for Resources and reported that this was a managed position, mainly due to vacant posts that had arisen in advance of planned MTFP savings.

**Resolved:**

That the forecast of outturn position be noted.

## **7 2023-24 Q3 Chief Executive's Revenue and Capital Budget**

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided details of the forecast revenue and capital outturn budget position for the Resources service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of December 2023 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Finance Manager, Resources and Regeneration highlighted the quarter three forecast position showing that the service was forecasting a cash limit underspend of £0.769 million against a revised budget of £4.323 million. The CEO cash limit balance carried forward at 31 March 2024 was forecast to be circa £0.829 million. Other earmarked reserves under the direct control of CEO were forecast to total £1.200 million at 31 March 2024 and the revised CEO capital budget was £1.892 million for 2023/24, with a total expenditure to 30 September 2023 of £0.691 million.

In response to a question from Councillor Elmer regarding what Central Support and Capital related to, the Finance Manager explained that this subjective category was used for accounting transactions such as capital financing or depreciation. He added that the £352,000 shown in the table against Central Support was a drawdown from Earmarked Reserves to fund spend shown in the other subjective categories within the table, such as Expenditure and Supplies.

**Resolved:**

That the forecast revenue and capital outturn budget position be noted.

Councillors Hovvels and Marshall left the meeting at 10.20 am

## **8 Q3 Performance Management Report**

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided an overview of progress towards delivery of the key priorities within the Council

Plan 2023-27 and covered performance in and to the end of quarter three, 2023/24, October to December 2023 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager highlighted some key areas of the report including staff sickness, finance, contact from members of the public and the big challenge of recruitment affecting areas such as social workers, planners, environment health.

Referring to the Carbon Reduction Dashboard on page 102 of the papers Councillor Elmer asked if there had been a significant rise for 2022. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager explained the figures were published on an annual basis from government and 2022 figures were awaited.

On page 164 of the papers Councillor Charlton said that the rise in victims reporting domestic abuse was partly due to people being aware that help was available. She still did not feel that the reduction of incidents was a true reflection but wanted to ensure that resources were available in all of the right areas.

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager informed members that the location of incidents of domestic abuse is routinely mapped and used to allocate resources by the police and other agencies dealing with domestic abuse and its impacts.

Councillors Surtees suggested that the terminology around this was changed to domestic abuse survivors, rather than victims.

Referring to page 221 of the paper Councillor Batey commented on the number of red KPIs relating to physical activity and asked if there could be a correlation between this and the new leisure centres being scrapped and were there enough physical activity opportunities being offered. The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager explained that these figures come from a survey so is difficult to obtain further data to a sub-county level, he would consult with the service.

Councillor Miller left the meeting at 10.35 am

Councillor Gunn understood that it was impossible to have leisure facilities in every town or village, however, accessibility was key and were we getting this right and was adequate transport available. She asked if more green spaces were available for free activities such as walking or cycling, which in turn was good for mental health.

The Chair agreed that access to all services was important, especially in rural areas.

Councillor Elmer understood the need for cars in some areas of the County but for those that did not have or did not want to use them a much better transport system needed to be in place. He believed that the recent parking charges introduced in some areas would seriously impact people's lives.

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager would check what information was available in the systems we held to see if there was a way to extract data on the breakdown of memberships in leisure facilities and attendance.

Councillor Surtees said that some children would not be eligible for the free school meals funding now and this would link to the leisure and education issues discussed previously.

Councillor Charlton said that there were a lot of free air open areas that could be utilised but not many children were seen playing as we lived in a culture that was more technology based where they would rather play on their phone or tablet than outdoors.

Councillor Jopling commented on the issues faced by schools in relation to finding suitable swimming venues as the pool in Crook had closed 10 years ago and schools in that area had to transport to Bishop Auckland. It was important to understand where to prioritise funding as cycle routes had recently improved in Crook. She believed that the Council's leisure facilities also needed to look at the market and be competitive.

Referring to physical activity Councillor Elmer said that adults figures showed similar to the national average, however for children this was very different and considerably lower than the national average. This caused him great concern and we needed to look into this more closely and find out the reasons behind it and if children were choosing not to be active.

Councillor Lines referred to the Bus Services Improvement Plan which he believed required a rescue plan. For Leisure Services he said that there were a lot of smaller scale projects that could take place with those in the local community leading on them. If advice was offered around leases and funding this would help people move forward. He added that recruitment continued to be an issue and local authorities were not as appealing as they once were as an employer due to funding issues and some facing bankruptcy.

Councillor Gunn said that there were local activities taking place in some villages but that they often needed a venue. Cuts to Town and Parish

Council funding had not helped as they would often support such requests and the same could be said of the County Council cuts too.

Councillor Batey added that community activities were pivotal and referred to a community building in her area that was waiting to be asset transferred to the local community. She said that we needed to look at the bigger picture as there was not sufficient transport to get to larger venues.

Councillor Shaw said that two leisure centres were cancelled in February that were originally included in the Leisure Transformation Programme. People were being asked to travel to their nearest facility which in his area could mean travelling to Sunderland as no provision was near enough in County Durham.

The Chair said that the Leisure Transformation had seemed to have disappeared from the agenda, from the notice of key decisions and had not been discussed since the MTFP report. He was open for this to come back to scrutiny.

Councillor Elmer said that it was important to analyse the data available and to also look at surveys carried out elsewhere to see how we were different. Young people needed to be asked what they preferred and what were the barriers in terms of access.

Councillor Jopling said that it was important to drill down and find out the reasons as there had been changes since COVID and huge price increases in buildings and construction costs. She added that it was important to realise that we could not deliver the wish list we once had as funding would need to be sought elsewhere.

The Chair commented that political choices had been made and costs had increased.

Councillor Reed referred to the wording in the leisure centre consultation as people were asked what they wanted. If they already had some facilities, they may not have highlighted it as a need as it was already there, such as swimming pools.

Councillor Gunn said that it was easier to access services in urban areas. As far as research was concerned, she did want to ensure that officers had the capacity to look at the areas of work we were asking them to do in terms of the links to poverty, access and bus routes. She suggested that we could work with universities.

The Chair said that we needed to look at the work programmes and report to the relevant committees.

### **Resolved**

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

## **9 Appointment of Non-Statutory, Non-voting Co-optees to Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

The Board considered a request to re-appoint the current serving non-statutory, non-voting co-optees for a further two-years (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that the term of appointment for the current serving co-optees would come to an end in June 2024 and therefore the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in accordance with paragraph six of the protocol were requested to extend the term of appointment for co-optees for a further two years. A full review of non-statutory, non-voting co-optee membership would then be undertaken in 2026.

In response to a question from Councillor Elmer the Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that subject to approval the correspondence was ready to send out in order to receive a response within a two week time period. He added that contact had been made with those individuals who had non-attendance, which had been due to capacity. He advised that it was within the committees power to terminate appointments and seek to re-appoint any vacancies.

### **Resolved:**

(a) That the extension of the term of appointment of existing non-statutory, non-voting co-optees for a further two years in accordance with paragraph six of the protocol (Appendix 2), be agreed.

(b) That a full review of non-statutory, non-voting co-optee membership be undertaken in 2026, be agreed.

## **10 Update in relation to Petitions**

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

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

Since the last update two new e-petitions had been submitted, both were ongoing and collecting signatures via the website.

One new paper petition had been submitted and as the Council had no direct control over the issue, the lead petitioner had been advised and the appropriate organisation had been made aware of the concerns raised.

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

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **11 Notice of Key Decisions**

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

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

- Medium Term Financial plan and Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25

The Democratic Services Manager explained to the Board that he had attempted to acquire details about the Leisure Transformation Programme and had been informed that options were being worked on for Cabinet, that it was a work in progress and there was no definite answer about when it would be added to the Notice of Key Decisions. He had expressed his disappointment in the delay in coming forward and asked that the next steps would be for it to be reported to COSMB.

The Chair said that in his opinion this looked evasive and members had received no feedback since the MTFP report.

Councillor Surtees felt that this was a blatant disregard for scrutiny and was disappointing as on the work programme for Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with no officers in attendance at any recent meetings and the Chair and Vice-Chair being left feeling that they could not undertake their role.

Councillor Gunn was deeply concerned that this was not allowing democracy to take place for elected members to be able to scrutinise any plans. She asked for clarity around the next steps.

The Chair would link with the relevant Chair and Vice Chair and the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth, and ask that the relevant Cabinet members were invited to attend to explain what stage the programme is at. He asked that this request be put formally in writing to the Portfolio Holder to attend the next EEOC or COSMB meeting. He added that he wanted to work with Cabinet on this issue to ensure that scrutiny have the option to discuss and comment.

Councillor Jopling left the meeting at 11.30 am

Councillor Elmer supported the Chair's request to ask the Portfolio Holder to attend a meeting to explain why there had been a significant delay.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

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**18 June 2024**

**Report on the Council's use of powers  
under the Regulation of Investigatory  
Powers Act 2000 – Quarter 4 –  
2023/2024**

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**Report of Helen Bradley, Director of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To inform members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period of 1 January 2024 and 31 March 2024 (quarter 4) to ensure that it is being used in accordance with the Council's policy.

**Executive summary**

- 2 This report provides an update of the activity for quarter 4 of 2023/2024 for Durham County Council in exercising its use of powers under RIPA for Directed Surveillance (DS) and Covert Human Intelligence Surveillance (CHIS).
- 3 The Council's Senior Responsible Officer is satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under RIPA during quarter 4 is consistent with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 4 It is recommended that Members:
  - (i) Receive the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period covering quarter 4 2023/2024.
  - (ii) Resolve that the powers are being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

## **Background**

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

## **Quarter 4 Activity**

- 9 During quarter 4 there was one CHIS application and no directed surveillance applications presented to the Court.
- 10 The CHIS application was granted in March 2024 and is in relation to the sale of counterfeit goods. As the operation is part of an ongoing investigation an update will be brought to a future meeting on the outcome.
- 11 For information comparison for the previous year in quarter 4, there was one authorisation for directed surveillance and one CHIS authorisation.

## **Background papers**

- None

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### **Author**

Lauren Smith

Tel: 03000 267870

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

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

### **Finance**

N/A.

### **Consultation**

N/A.

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

N/A.

### **Climate Change**

N/A.

### **Human Rights**

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

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

### **Staffing**

Not applicable.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

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

## **Procurement**

N/A.

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Board**

**18 June 2024**

**Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report  
2023/24**



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**Report of Helen Bradley, Director of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with the Overview and Scrutiny Annual report 2023/24 for comment and approval prior to submission to the County Council meeting in July 2024. The report is attached at Appendix 2.

**Executive summary**

- 2 In accordance with Article 6, paragraph 6.4 of the Council's Constitution, COSMB is required to report annually to the County Council on its work with recommendations for its future work programme.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 3 COSMB is recommended to:
  - (a) Consider and comment on the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2023/24.
  - (b) Agree that the report be submitted to the County Council meeting in July 2024.

**Background**

- 4 Each year the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report is prepared to provide information on activity by both COSMB and the five thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programmes. This work

programme activity includes in-depth and light touch reviews, monitoring of performance management and budgetary reporting.

- 5 This report reflects the work undertaken by all overview and scrutiny committee members throughout 2023/24. A six month update of scrutiny activity will be submitted to the County Council in January 2025.
- 6 The Annual Report also includes detail on the statutory scrutiny roles with health and crime and disorder.

### **Background papers**

- None

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**Contact:** Stephen Gwilym 03000 268140

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None

### **Finance**

None

### **Consultation**

None

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

None

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Risk**

None

### **Procurement**

None

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**Appendix 2: Overview and Scrutiny Annual report 2023/24**  
(attached as a separate item)

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# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/2024

# Introduction

This year I was honoured to be appointed Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB). I welcomed the opportunity to return to the role as chair of the board responsible for overseeing and co-ordinating the work of overview and scrutiny and its committees.

The Council continues to operate in a period of significant financial uncertainty with no long-term financial settlement for local government causing additional pressure. A key task for scrutiny is to hold the executive to account and each year Cabinet's budget proposals are prioritised for scrutiny by COSMB. This year they have again worked diligently and constructively in scrutinising Cabinet's medium term financial plans.

Several significant strategies and policies have been developed and consulted upon during the course of the past year with further consultations expected during 2024/25. This annual report sets out some examples of where the Overview and Scrutiny Committees have worked with service groupings to ensure that members' views and considerations are taken into account when formulating Council strategy and policy and presenting these to Cabinet and Council for approval.

We continue to be committed to the key principle of openness and transparency within the scrutiny function. In order to enhance these principles and provide an opportunity for the voice of local communities to be reflected and amplified in the work of scrutiny, we appoint non-statutory, non-voting co-optees to the five thematic OSCs. A full refresh of co-optees was undertaken in 2022 and it was agreed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in April 2024 that the appointment of the co-optees be extended by a further two years to 2026 when a further refresh will be undertaken.

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

**Councillor Rob Crute**

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

# Overview and Scrutiny in County Durham

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

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

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

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

DCC appoints members to six overview and scrutiny committees. DCC has 126 members and of these over 80 take part in scrutiny activity. (Following an electoral review of Durham County Council new arrangements will come into force from May 2025 which will reduce the overall number of members.)



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

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

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

## Co-optees and engagement

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

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

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

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

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

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

We undertake a full refresh of our co-opted members every four years with the latest refresh undertaken in May and June 2022. The new cohort of co-optees appointed to the OSCs included some experienced co-optees who had previously served for a number of years, complemented by new appointees bringing a range of skills, professional competencies and lived experience to

ensure that the voice of the public is given an opportunity to be promoted and listened to. A full refresh of co-optees will be undertaken in 2026.

Anyone who would like to express an interest in serving as a co-optee is requested to contact the Scrutiny Team.

## Overview and Scrutiny Review Activity

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

During the past year, several significant new Council policies and strategies have been developed and subject to extensive consultation. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees have concentrated on their respective roles in shaping and informing Council and partnership policy through workshop activity and these formal consultation mechanisms. Examples of this include:

- The Inclusive Economic Strategy Draft Delivery Plan – E&E OSC
- The Destination Management Plan for County Durham – E&E OSC and ESC OSC
- County Durham's Tourism and the Visitor Economy - E&E OSC and ESC OSC
- The County Durham Housing Strategy – E&E OSC
- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – E&E OSC
- The new Place Brand for County Durham – E&E OSC and ESC OSC.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – CYP OSC
- Children's Social Care Demand – CYP OSC
- Community Water Fluoridation in the North East of England – AWH OSC and CYP OSC
- Sexual Health Strategy – CYP OSC and AWH OSC
- Library Transformation – ESC OSC
- Safe Durham Partnership Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy – SSC OSC
- County Durham Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan – SSC OSC
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy – CYP OSC and AWH OSC
- Quality Accounts for County Durham and Darlington NHS FT; Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT and North East Ambulance Service NHSFT – AWH OSC
- Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2022-25 – AWH OSC
- Oral Health Promotion Strategy 2023 – AWH OSC

# Planned Overview and Scrutiny in 2024/25

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

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

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

A summary of the key issues for the 2024/25 Work Programme is below:

## Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

- Medium Term Financial Plan and budget setting
- Council Plan 2024-28 Refresh
- Poverty Action Group Annual Report
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)
- Performance and budget outturn
- Workforce Strategy
- North East Combined Authority
- The County Durham Pound Project
- General Fund and Capital Final Outturn
- Annual Representations Report
- County Durham Partnership Update
- Digital Strategy
- Community Engagement (AAP) Review

## Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Programmes
- Strategic Place Plans
- Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plan
- Strategic Sites

- New identified industrial sites
- Major Programmes
- Skills Development
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan
- Housing Strategy Delivery Plan
- Selective Licensing Scheme
- Council New Housing Build Programme
- Supported Housing Improvement Programme
- Leisure Transformation Programme
- County Durham Visitor Economy
- Destination Management Plan for County Durham
- Development of the new Place Brand for County Durham

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Child Poverty
- SEND Update
- Early Help Service
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Home to School Transport Update
- Best Start in Life
- Vaccination Take up
- Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- CAMHS – Waiting Times
- Attendance Update
- Support for Young People not in Education, Employment or Training
- Risks Outside the Home
- Review of Children’s Social Care Update
- Sufficiency Strategy

## Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Waste & Recycling
- Simplified Recycling
- Woodland Management
- Highway, Footway and Bridge Maintenance
- Library provision
- Strategic Leisure Framework
- Management of DCC Theatres
- Ecological Emergency
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Management of DCC land for biodiversity
- Environment and Climate Change Partnership
- CERP3

- Air quality
- Fly-tipping
- Waste and Recycling
- Environmental Awards
- Durham City Green Corridor

## Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Safe Durham Partnership priorities – ASB, hate crime, sexual violence and other violent crime
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and delivery plan
- Horden Together
- Off road bikes and vehicles
- Probation Services and reducing re-offending
- Serious Violence strategy
- Drug and alcohol services
- Youth Justice plan
- Prevent Strategy: countering terrorism, radicalism and violent extremism
- Open water safety
- Domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Road safety

## Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- NHS Statutory Consultations/Legislative plans
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Systems and Partnerships
- Health Protection and Assurance
- Adult and Health Services Updates
- CQC Adult Social Care Assurance Framework;
- Shotley Bridge Community hospital
- Oral Health and Community Water Fluoridation
- Winter Planning and Preparedness
- Public health funding and services/campaigns
- NHS Foundation Trust performance and Oversight of CQC Inspection and Improvement Plans –
  - County Durham and Darlington NHS FT
  - Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
  - North East Ambulance Services NHS FT

# Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board 2023/24



Cllr Rob Crute  
Chair



Cllr Chris Lines  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2023/24 include:

- Monitored the Council's applications for surveillance under the Regulation of Investigative Powers Act 2000 and reviewed the RIPA scheme to ensure it is fit for purpose
- Examined and commented on the Council's updated Digital Strategy
- Considered and approved the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23 and agreed its submission to Council
- Consideration of the [Key Decisions of cabinet](#)
- Called-in the Cabinet decision of 14 June 2023 in respect of the Home to School Transport Services consultation outcomes
- Scrutinised the outcome of the Council's Community Engagement Review and commented on the results of the consultation exercise and development of Local Networks
- Supported the Council's work in developing new ways of working via digital solutions
- Reviewed the Council's Statutory Representations report for 2022/23 and agreed its publication on the website
- Received updates in respect of the County Durham Pound Project and its role in promoting social value and wealth building
- Agreed key priority actions and workplace initiatives following scrutiny of the results of the 2022 workplace survey
- Examined the Poverty Action Steering Group Annual report 2022/23
- Reviewed the refresh of the Council Plan 2024/2028

# Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24



Cllr Veronica Andrews  
Chair



Cllr Matt Johnson  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2023/24 include:

- Reviewed and commented on the draft Integrated Care Board County Durham Plan 2023/24
- Examined plans by Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT to review the clinical model for Adults Learning Disabilities services across County Durham and the Tees Valley
- Engaged in the refresh of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-28 and receiving the final strategy and priorities
- Examined the County Durham Health Protection Assurance Annual Report
- Considered and commented on the North East and North Cumbria ICB Joint Forward Plan 2023/24 to 2028/29
- Examined details of CQC Inspection reports and associated Improvement Plans in respect of:-
  - County Durham and Darlington NHS FT Maternity Services
  - Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
- Scrutinised proposals to reconfigure Community Mental Health Services for Older People in County Durham and Darlington by Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT
- Monitored progress of plans in respect of the future of services at Shotley Bridge Hospital and the provision of a replacement facility
- Considered updates in respect of Adult Social Care and the Introduction of Local Authority Assessment by the CQC
- Reviewed the Winter preparedness Plans for 2023/24 of the County Durham Care Partnership
- Reviewed ICB Plans for NHS Dentistry Services following members concerns at the reduction of access to NHS Dentistry Services

- Engaged with key NHS, Health and Social Care stakeholders to share information regarding:
  - Healthwatch County Durham Annual Report
  - Director of Public Health County Durham Annual Report
  - NHS Quality Accounts for North East Ambulance Services NHS FT; Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT and County Durham and Darlington NHS FT
  - Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT Community Services Transformation Plan

# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24



Cllr Anne Reed  
Chair



Cllr James Cosslett  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2023/24 include:

- Starting Well Partnership Priorities
- Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Programme
- Home to School Transport Proposals Feedback
- Best Start in Life
- 0-25 Family Health Services
- Family Hubs – Start for Life
- Valuing Neurodiversity in County Durham
- Preparation for Adulthood
- Sexual Health Strategy
- Children and Young People and Vaping – the Evidence Base
- Pre Birth Intervention Update
- Support for Children and Families on the edge of care
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- School Attendance and Inclusion
- School Ofsted Update and Educational Attainment
- Elective Home Education
- Children's Social Care Demand
- Children and Young People's Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn
- Informal information session on Sufficiency and Third Party Payments
- Visits to Family Hubs and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

# Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24



Cllr Bill Moist  
Chair



Cllr Angela Surtees  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2023/24 include:

- Town and Villages Programme
- Business Start-up Support
- Strategic Sites
- Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plan
- Major Programmes
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- County Durham Draft Housing Strategy
- County Durham Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
- Supported Housing Improvement Programme
- Selective licensing Scheme
- Council New Homes Delivery Programme
- Masterplan activity
- Skills Development
- Destination Management Plan
- County Durham Visitor Economy
- Promoting the Tourism offer
- Transport Regional and Local
- New Place Brand for County Durham
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn
- Informal Awareness session on:
  - Selective Licensing Scheme

# Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24



Cllr Bev Coult  
Chair



Cllr Jonathan Elmer  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2023/24 include:

- Woodland Management
- Tree Management Policy
- Highways, Footways & Bridges Maintenance
- Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project
- Ecological Emergency Update
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Strategic Leisure Framework
- Library Transformation
- Fly Tipping
- Bereavement Services
- Community Protection Service Overview
- CERP2
- Energy from Mine Water
- Durham City's Green Corridor
- Allotment Update
- DCC land for Biodiversity
- Environment and Climate Change Partnership Update
- Destination Management Plan
- County Durham's Tourist Economy
- Transport – Regional and Local
- Quarterly Performance Management
- Quarterly Forecast Revenue and Capital Outturn
  
- Informal Information Sessions on Fuel Poverty, Pest Control and Air Quality Management Plan
- Visits to Hardwick Park and Morrison Busty

# Safer & Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24



Cllr Phil Heaviside  
Chair



Cllr Joyce Charlton  
Vice chair

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

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2023/24 include:

- County Durham Youth Justice Service
- Anti-social behaviour strategy, delivery plan and strategic group updates
- Safe Durham Partnership refresh of partnership priorities
- Nuisance vehicles/Off road bikes
- Open water safety
- Alcohol and drug services
- Home fire safety
- Horden Together project
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group annual report
- Civil Contingency Planning and Storm Arwen Review
- Serious Violence Strategy
- Prevent Strategy: Countering terrorism radicalisation and violent extremism
- Public Protection Service: enforcement and intervention activity
- Road safety
- Probation Service and reduction of reoffending
- County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Community Risk Management Plan
- Informal Awareness sessions on:
  - Anti-Social Behaviour - Theory of Change
  - Empty Properties

## Regional Scrutiny

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

## North East Combined Authority scrutiny arrangements

In May 2024, a new Mayor was elected for the LA 7 authorities of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland and the North East Combined Authority formed. A new constitution for that Authority has been agreed and Overview and Scrutiny arrangements are set to be formalised. Durham County Council will collaborate closely with other Council's as part of these arrangements to ensure appropriate scrutiny and challenge is part of the governance arrangements.

During 2023/24 we have continued to work with other regional authorities as the North East Combined Authority (NECA) which comprised the four councils of Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

NECA had three broad areas of focus:

- Transport
- Employability and Inclusion
- Economic Development and Regeneration

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

Durham County Council was represented on the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Councillor Rob Crute Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Councillor Chris Lines, Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board . Councillors Angela Surtees, Vice Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Joyce Charlton are the nominated substitute members.

Transport was of strategic importance to the North East and both NECA and the North of Tyne Combined Authority (Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland councils) worked collaboratively to ensure effective decision making takes place across the region. We worked with NECA and the North of Tyne Combined Authority on a North East Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee established with representatives from all seven authorities. Councillors Jake Miller and Councillor Chris Lines represent Durham County Council. With Councillors Kevin Shaw and Joyce Charlton as the nominated substitute members.

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

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

## Regional Health Scrutiny

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

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

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

## Sub Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committees

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

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

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

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

# Overview and Scrutiny Team

The Overview and Scrutiny team is part of the Chief Executive's Directorate.

- Helen Bradley, Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer.
- Michael Turnbull, Democratic Services Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer
- Stephen Gwilym, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer.
- Diane Close, Clare Luery and Ann Whitton - Overview and Scrutiny Officers.

Scrutiny office: 03000 265978

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

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

## Key contacts:

Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

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

Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

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

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

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

Economy and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

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

Environment and Sustainability Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

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

Safer Stronger Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

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

**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**

**18 June 2024**

**Refresh of the Work  
Programme 2024/25 for the  
Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**



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**Report of Helen Bradley, Director of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) with the updated work programme for 2024/2025.

**Executive summary**

- 2 COSMB review their work programme each year to reflect the objectives and associated outcomes and actions identified within the Council Plan 2024-2028 and in the context of the County Durham Vision 2035.
- 3 The proposed COSMB work programme has been framed around the shared County Durham Vision 2035 based on the three strategic ambitions of 'more and better jobs', 'long and independent lives' and 'connected communities'. COSMB's work programme also reflects the Our Council theme in the refreshed Council plan.
- 4 The proposed work programme also reflects the refreshed Council Plan adopted by the County Council at its meeting on 28 February 2024.

**Recommendations**

- 5 COSMB is recommended to:
  - a) Receive and comment on the proposed COSMB work programme for 2024/25

Agree the COSMB work programme for 2024/2025 and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues.

## **Background**

- 6 COSMB has a strong focus on the MTFP and service improvement and this will continue in 2024/25. The Board will also contribute to policy development where it can add value and insight.
- 7 The current overview and scrutiny committees work programmes are informed by:
  - County Durham Vision for 2035
  - Council Plan
  - Cabinet's Notice of Key Decisions
  - Partnership plans and strategies
  - Performance and budgetary control data
  - Changes in government legislation
  - Key questions for improving performance
  - Local priorities
- 8 The County Durham Partnership agreed a Vision for County Durham 2035 which sets out our strategic direction and what we would like to achieve over the next 15 years. It was developed with partner organisations and the public. It is structured around three broad ambitions for the people of County Durham.
  - A place where there are more and better jobs
  - People live long, healthy and independent lives
  - Communities are well connected and supportive
- 9 Each ambition contains a number of objectives together with some council specific objectives. Following the refresh of the Council Plan in February 2024, it is now structured around five themes which reflect our contribution towards achieving the three ambitions within the Vision for County Durham as well as the council's own improvement agenda:
  - Our Economy
  - Our Environment
  - Our People
  - Our Communities
  - Our Council

## **Council Plan 2024 - 2028**

- 10 The Council Plan is the primary corporate planning document for the county council. It details Durham County Council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Vision for County Durham 2035 together with its own ambitious agenda. It provides a summary for members, partners and the public of our priorities for the county and the main programmes of work that we will undertake to help achieve these priorities. The Plan will now be refreshed each year to reflect the integration of corporate and financial planning.
- 11 Both the Vision for County Durham and the Council Plan are structured around the three ambitions for the county and our own improvement agenda. The 'our council' theme captures the corporate initiatives the council has identified and wants to undertake to achieve the ambitions within the vision:
- a) Our resources will be managed effectively
  - b) Create a workforce for the future
  - c) Design our services with service users
  - d) Use data and technology more effectively
  - e) We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture

### **Current Work Programme**

- 12 During 2023/2024, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has undertaken review work on the Budget and MTFP process; exercised call in of Cabinet proposals in respect of home to school transport and scrutinised the outcome of the Council's Community Engagement Review and commented on the results of the consultation exercise and development of Local Networks.
- 13 Overview activity has included:-
- Monitoring the Council's applications for surveillance under the Regulation of Investigative Powers Act 2000 and reviewing the RIPA scheme to ensure it is fit for purpose.
  - Examination of the Council's updated Digital Strategy.
  - Approving the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 and agreed its submission to Council.
  - Consideration of the [Key Decisions of cabinet](#)
  - Supported the Council's work in developing new ways of working via digital solutions.
  - Reviewed the Council's Statutory Representations report for 2022/23 and agreed its publication on the website.
  - Received updates in respect of the County Durham Pound Project and its role in promoting social value and wealth building.

- Agreed key priority actions and workplace initiatives following scrutiny of the results of the 2022 workplace survey.
- Examined the Poverty Action Steering Group Annual report 2022/23.
- Reviewed the refresh of the Council Plan 2024/2028.

14 Budgetary and performance monitoring:

- Quarterly budgetary monitoring for the Resources service grouping.
- Quarterly corporate performance monitoring overview for the whole Council.

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

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

### **Background papers**

- [Council Plan 2024-28](#)
- [County Durham Vision 2035](#)

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**Contact:** Stephen Gwilym

Tel :03000 268140

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None

### **Finance**

None

### **Consultation**

None

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

None

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Risk**

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

### **Procurement**

None

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

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Attached as a separate document.

<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25</b> Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB)</p> <p>Lead officer: Helen Bradley Key service contact: Michael Turnbull</p> <p>Strategic Oversight of Council Plan 2024-28 and its priorities with specific responsibility for the Our Council priority.</p>	<p>Overview and Scrutiny Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A systematic six monthly review of progress against recommendations/action plan</li> </ul> <p>Scrutiny/Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth review/light touch review</li> </ul> <p>Overview/progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on an issue; opportunity to comment, shape, influence, progress with a scrutiny review</li> </ul> <p>Performance/Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing quarterly monitoring performance reports/budgets</li> </ul>
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Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
<b>O/S Review</b>					
<b>Scrutiny/Working Group (light touch / in-depth review)</b>					
Budget and MTFP process	3 Sept 2024 2 December 2024 21 January 2025 13 February 2025	Report to COSMB	Paul Darby	To enable scrutiny members to comment and feed into the MTFP and budget setting process	To look at any issues and or reviews linked to achieving savings within the MTFP  Update reports considered by COSMB

Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
<b>Overview/Progress</b>					
North East Combined Authority Update	28 October 2024	Report to COSMB	Chief Executive	To update members on the establishment and priorities of the North East Combined Authority	Members information and comment

Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
Community Engagement (AAP) Review – Update	28 October or 2 December 2024	Report to COSMB	Andy Kerr/Emma Gardner	To update members on proposals for the implementation of the Community Engagement (AAP) Review recommendations and Area Networks	Members Information
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and six monthly report to Council	18 June 2024  2 Dec 2024	Report to COSMB	Stephen Gwilym	Members to sign off the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and six monthly update before submission to Council.	Members' information, and circulated widely
Digital Strategy	2 December 2024	Report to COSMB	Marion Ingleby	To update members of the COSMB on the progress made against the Digital Strategy	Members Information

Page 30	Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
	HQ and Accommodation Strategy	TBC	Report to COSMB	Susan Robinson	To update members on the HQ development and associated accommodation plans.	Members' information
	Refresh of the Workforce Strategy 2024-2027	3 September 2024	Report to COSMB	Alison Lazazzera	To update members on the refresh of the Workforce Strategy 2023-27	Members' information
	The County Durham Pound – update	28 October 2024	Report to COSMB	Corporate Procurement Officer	To update members on progress with the initiatives	Members' information
	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act annual report	28 Oct 2024	Report to COSMB	TBC	To inform members of the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and to review the RIPA policy	Members' information and recommendations to Cabinet
	Annual Representations report 2023/24	3 September 2024	Report to COSMB	Lesley Martin	To present key messages in relation to the management and handling of statutory representations for Children and Adults Social Services.	Members' information
	Council Plan Refresh 2023 – 2027	2 December 2024	Report to COSMB	Steve Evans	To update members on the refresh of the Council Plan and the development of revised performance management reporting	Members' information

Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) quarterly report	Quarter 4 2023/24 18 June 2024  Quarter 1 2024/25 3 September 2024  Quarter 2 2024/25 28 October 2024  Quarter 3 2024/25 13 February 2025	Report to COSMB	TBC	To inform members of the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) on a quarterly basis.	Members' information
Notice of Key Decisions	At each COSMB	Report to Committee	Michael Turnbull	To keep members informed of any additions or amendments.	Members' information
<b>Performance/Budget</b>					
<b>Performance</b> Quarterly reporting to include Customer Feedback reporting	Q4 2023/24 3 September 2024  Q1 2024/25 28 October 2024	Report to COSMB	Steve Evans/Vicky Murray	To provide members with progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework including Customer Feedback information.	Standing item



Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
	Q2 2024/25 2 December 2024  Q3 2024/25 13 February 2025				
General Fund Revenue & Capital Final Outturn (Cabinet July 2024)	3 Sept 2024	Report to COSMB	Paul Darby	To provide members with the final revenue and capital outturn for the General Fund and achievement of MTFP savings.	For members information
<b>Periodic updates</b>					
Poverty Action Strategy Annual Report	TBC	Report to COSMB	TBC	To keep members informed of the progress being made by the council and its partners in addressing welfare reform and the wider poverty issues in the county.	For information
County Durham Partnership update	TBC	Cabinet report to COSMB	Julie Bradbrook	To keep members informed of issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership and other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.	For information
Petitions updates Quarterly	18 June 2024 3 Sept 2024 2 Dec 2024	Report to COSMB	Jackie Graham	To keep members informed of the status of petitions received by the Authority	For information

Item	When	What	Who	Outcome	Comment
	28 March 2025				

**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**

**18 June 2024**



**Update in relation to Petitions**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Helen Bradley, Director of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide for information the quarterly update in relation to the current situation regarding various petitions received by the Authority.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 2 Members are requested to note the update report on the status of petitions and e-petitions received by the Authority.

**Background**

- 3 Following the introduction of The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 all of the petitions that have been received by the Authority are processed by democratic services in line with its petitions process.
- 4 The Board have received update reports on petitions since September 2008.
- 5 From the 15 December 2010, the Authority has provided a facility for members of the public to submit e-petitions on the Council's website.

**Current Petitions**

- 6 Since the last update five new e-petitions have been submitted, one has completed, three were not valid as one received no signatures, one related to other procedures, and one was similar to a petition received within a 12 month period. The remaining petition is currently live on the website collecting signatures.

- 7 Two new paper petitions have been submitted, one was rejected as did not meet the criteria however the service have responded directly to the petitioner. The other is awaiting a response from the service. A list giving details and current status of all active petitions is attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

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**Contact:** Michael Turnbull

Tel: 03000 269714

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None.

### **Finance**

None.

### **Consultation**

Petitions which refer to a consultation exercise are reported to committee for information and forwarded to the relevant officer for consideration

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

None.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.

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Nature of Petition	Appropriate Service	Summary of Information	Status of Petition
<p>Petition 449</p> <p>Speed outside school - Cotherstone Primary</p> <p><b>E-Petition</b> Received 25.1.24 No. of signatures 12</p>	<p>REG</p>	<p>Petition asking the Council to lower the speed limit by Cotherstone Primary School, Cotherstone.</p> <p>E-Petition ran from 25.1.24 – 7.3.24</p> <p>Although this location would not meet our policy for the reduction to a lower legal speed limit of 20mph from the existing 30mph we would be happy to progress a school advisory 20mph for the village, subject to funding. We would always support this type of proposal although this would require the funding support of local County Councillors and/or the Parish Council. The cost to install an advisory 20mph zone is approx. £15k (this includes a £2.5k package of education and marketing delivered by our Road Safety Team).</p> <p>We have recently undertaken a road marking and signage audit in Cotherstone and as a result we will be implementing some enhanced slow markings on approach to the village to aid drivers and to help with compliance to the current speed limit. In addition, some signs have been identified for routine maintenance activity and these will be replaced as soon as our current workload will permit.</p> <p>As part of an agreed protocol, all speeding complaints are directed towards Durham Constabulary primarily through their Police and Communities Together (PACT) Meetings, enabling the appropriate level of intervention and action to be considered.</p>	<p>Petition CLOSED</p>
<p>Petition 450</p> <p>Save Leazes Footbridge, Durham City</p> <p><b>E-Petition</b></p>	<p>NCC</p>	<p>Petition asking the Council to further explore the repair and replacement options for Leazes Footbridge, until a workable solution is found, and to make a functioning footbridge a top priority.</p>	<p>E-Petition to run from 6.2.24 – 14.6.24</p>

Nature of Petition	Appropriate Service	Summary of Information	Status of Petition
<p>Received 4.2.24 No. of signatures</p>			
<p>Petition 451  Bus Routes Shildon  <b>E-Petition</b> Received 15.2.24 No of signatures 48</p>	<p>REG</p>	<p>Petition asking for the Council to reinstate the bus routes in Shildon.</p> <p>E-Petition to run from 15.2.24 – 28.3.24</p> <p>Within this area, Arriva services 1 and 5 are operated commercially during the daytime without any subsidy from the local authority, we do provide subsidy for trips that operate on an evening. Arriva can set routes, fares and timetables as it sees fit, although in registering a change the information becomes public and can be shared with and commented on by stakeholders.</p> <p>Arriva implemented commercial changes to withdraw service X1 in July 2023 to improve cost efficiencies within the business as the former network was unsustainable in its form. In aim to mitigate impacts to customers in Shildon, the commercial service 1 was re-routed to serve West Road thus to maintain a link to Tindale Crescent for access to local shops and amenities.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the withdrawal of the X1 and re-route to service 1 did result in a loss of service provision along Auckland Terrace, Adelaide Bank, and Byerley Road. Durham County Council appreciate that the impact of a longer walk to access alternative services for some customers. Durham County Council investigated the potential for replacement service provision but was not successfully implemented due to a combination of both operator resource and budget pressures.</p>	<p>Petition CLOSED</p>

Nature of Petition	Appropriate Service	Summary of Information	Status of Petition
		<p>The Durham County Council Access Bus as part of Integrated Passenger Transport also provides a timetabled bus service to popular shopping and leisure destinations for people who have difficulty getting about. The service covers towns and villages across the county including Shildon. All vehicles are fully accessible for people who are disabled or have mobility problems. More information is available on Durham County Councils website <a href="https://www.durham.gov.uk/accessbus">https://www.durham.gov.uk/accessbus</a></p>	
<p>Petition 453 Child Friendly Village <b>E-Petition</b> Received 17.3.24 No. of signatures 44</p>	<p>REG</p>	<p>Petition asking the Council to make Hutton Henry a safe place for school children and residents.  E-Petition ran from 17.3.24 – 3.6.24</p>	<p>Awaiting response from service.</p>
<p>Petition 455 HMOs <b>E-Petition</b> Received 20.3.24 No. of signatures 153</p>	<p>NCC/REG</p>	<p>Petition asking the Council to adopt a policy that informs all local residents and the wider community of any potential new applications for HMO's in East Durham area.  E-Petition ran from 20.3.24 – 1.5.24  Landlords or agents must apply for planning permission to convert homes into HMOs for more than six people. If the landlord or agent rents out a house to six occupants or fewer, it is considered permitted development and planning permission is not required.  In some cases, an Article 4 Direction can be made by the Council that requires planning permission to be sought for HMOs with six or fewer occupants. This is intended for areas with a high density of HMOs where there is evidence of a detrimental impact on residents.</p>	<p>Petition CLOSED</p>

Nature of Petition	Appropriate Service	Summary of Information	Status of Petition
		<p>Where planning permission is required, there is a statutory requirement to consult with relevant parties. Letters are sent to neighbours to notify them of the proposals and where it is considered necessary specialists will be asked for their expert opinion. Those not in the immediate area can view planning applications online on the Councils website  <a href="https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/8276/View-and-comment-on-current-planning-applications">https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/8276/View-and-comment-on-current-planning-applications</a></p> <p>Landlords or agents managing a property for five or more occupiers must apply for an HMO licence from Durham County Council. Under the Housing Act 2004, the landlord does not need to apply for the licence until the property is occupied by tenants, meaning local authorities have no control over a property being converted into an HMO and no insight into who the tenants will be. The council is legally bound to grant a five-year HMO licence if the applicant meets the nationally set requirements. Until such time as an HMO licence is granted, the local authority may not enforce the higher level of control imposed by conditions associated with the licensing regime.</p> <p>In County Durham, private landlords must apply for a Selective Licence if the property falls within one of the 103 designated Selective Licencing areas. Selective Licence holders must comply with conditions to make sure the properties and tenancies are managed effectively. In these areas, the landlord of an HMO with fewer than five tenants would require this licence.</p> <p>Durham County Council follows relevant legislative requirements and associated guidance concerning houses in multiple occupation. Currently the process set out in law and agreed by Government does not require consultation for HMO's that do not require planning permission.</p>	

**Petition Table – Active Petitions**

**Appendix 2**

Nature of Petition	Appropriate Service	Summary of Information	Status of Petition
<p>Petition 460</p> <p>Station Hotel, South Hetton repurposing/ demolition</p> <p><b>E-Petition</b> Received 30.5.24 No. of signatures</p>	<p>REG</p>	<p>Petition asking the Council to ensure a compulsory purchase order is completed or take greater enforcement action to repurpose to demolish the Station Hotel in South Hetton which is currently a dilapidated, dangerous disgrace in the centre of the village.</p>	<p>E-Petition to run from 30.5.24 – 1.9.24</p>
<p>Petition 461</p> <p>Traffic Light Controlled Junction at Murray Park and The Beeches, Stanley</p> <p>Received 5.6.24 No. of signatures 88</p>	<p>REG</p>	<p>Petition asking the Council to install traffic light controlled junction at Murray Park and The Beeches, Stanley.</p>	<p>Awaiting response from the service.</p>

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**Corporate Overview and  
Scrutiny Management Board**



**18 June 2024**

**Notice of Key Decisions**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Helen Bradley, Director of Legal and Democratic Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To consider the list of key decisions that is scheduled to be considered by the Executive.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 2 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny management board is recommended to give consideration to items listed in the notice.

**Background**

- 3 New rules in relation to Executive decisions were introduced by The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, which came into force on 10 September 2012.
- 4 The regulations took away the requirement for the Executive to produce a Forward Plan of key decisions, however introduced that the decision maker cannot make a key decision unless a document has been published at least 28 clear days before the decision is taken, unless either a general exception or special urgency requirements have been met. The document which has to be published must state:
  - a) that the key decision is to be made on behalf of the relevant local authority
  - b) the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made

- c) where the decision maker is an individual, that individual's name and title if any and where the decision maker is a decision making body, its name and list of its members
  - d) the date on which or the period within which the decision is to be made
  - e) a list of the document submitted to the decision maker for consideration in relation to the matter of which the key decision is to be made
  - f) the address from which, subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure copies of, or extracts from any document listed as available
  - g) that other documents relevant to those matters may be submitted to the decision maker
  - h) the procedure for requesting details of those documents (if any) as they become available.
- 5 The requirements also apply to an exempt matter as previously it did not strictly have to be included in the Forward Plan. Now a publicity document must contain particulars of the matter, but may not contain any confidential exempt information or particulars of the adviser or political adviser or assistant.
- 6 Notices of key decisions that are being produced meet the legal requirements of publication, as well as continuing to provide information for a four month period. Members will therefore be able to consider key decisions as previously for the four month period.

### **Current Notice of Key Decisions**

- 7 The notice of key decisions that is attached to the report at Appendix 2, is the latest to be published prior to the papers for the Board being dispatched to members. The notice complies with the requirements for Cabinet to take key decisions at its meeting to be held on 19 June 2024. It also contained information on those key decisions that are currently scheduled to be considered by the Executive up to 30 September 2024.

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**Contact:** Michael Turnbull

Tel: 03000 269714

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet. To publish the notice of key decisions in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

### **Finance**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Consultation**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

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

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Climate Change**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Human Rights**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Staffing**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Accommodation**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Risk**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

### **Procurement**

Will be reflected in each individual key decision report to Cabinet.

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**SECTION ONE - CORPORATE**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>	<b>Scrutiny Involvement</b>
CORP/R/2024/001	10/07/24	Medium Term Financial Plan and Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25		Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance		Rob Davisworth - Head of Corporate Finance and Commercial Services Tel: 03000 261946	Scrutiny members will consider this as part of the Scrutiny of the MTFP through COSMB Meetings
CORP/R/2024/004	18/09/24	Review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26		Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance		Victoria Murray - Head of Transactional and Customer Services Tel: 03000 267707	Scrutiny members will consider this as part of the Scrutiny of the MTFP through COSMB Meetings

**SECTION TWO - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>
CYPS/2024/003	18/09/2024	LADO Annual Report		Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services		John Pearce, Corporate Director Children & Young Peoples Services Tel: 03000 266593

**SECTION THREE - ADULT AND HEALTH SERVICES**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)</b>	<b>Description of Decision to be Made</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>	<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Main Consultees &amp; Means of Consultation</b>	<b>Contact details for further information</b>
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## SECTION FOUR - REGENERATION, ECONOMY AND GROWTH

Ref. No.	Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)	Description of Decision to be Made	Background Documents	Lead Cabinet Member	Main Consultees & Means of Consultation	Contact details for further information
REG/2024/005	04/06/24	Milburngate Update (exempt report)		Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment and Assets		Susan Robinson, Head of Corporate Property & Land Tel: 03000 267332

## SECTION FIVE - NEIGHBOURHOODS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Ref. No.	Date of Decision (i.e. date of Cabinet meeting)	Description of Decision to be Made	Background Documents	Lead Cabinet Member	Main Consultees & Means of Consultation	Contact details for further information	Scrutiny Involvement
NCC/2024/002	10/07/24	Climate Emergency Response Plan 2 - 2022/23 Update		Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change		Oliver Sherratt, Head of Environment Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Tel: 03000 268080	Monitoring of the progress against the key milestones within the Climate Emergency Response Plan 2 is undertaken by the ESCOSC.

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