

# DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

## ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 18 December 2024** at **9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor S Zair (Chair)**

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

Councillors A Batey, R Crute, M Currah, P Heaviside, G Hutchinson, C Lines, R Manchester, B Moist, K Shaw, M Stead, A Sterling and D Wood

### **Co-opted Members:**

Mrs R Morris and Mr E Simons

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Surtees, G Binney and R Ormerod.

## **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members.

## **3 Minutes**

Councillor Moist made reference to page 7 of the minutes from the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 4 November, which referred to him submitting additional questions in relation to the Leisure Transformation Programme, following the Special Joint meeting focusing on the programme which had been held on the 23 September. The minutes of the meeting held on the 4 November stated that the Chair of the committee was liaising with Overview and Scrutiny Officers to get a response from the Service Grouping to Councillor Moist's additional questions. Councillor Moist informed the committee that he had still not received a response from the Service Grouping.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a response had been sent to Councillor Moist and to the members of the committee. Councillor Moist commented that he would speak to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer outside of the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **5 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

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

#### **6 Council House Delivery Programme - Update**

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and presentation which provided an update on the council house delivery programme; background to the programme; update on activities since the January 2024 report to Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (EEOOSC); update on the delivery pipeline for new build development and an overview of the building conversions and acquisitions scheme (for copy of report and presentation slides, see file of minutes).

The Housing Delivery Manager provided Members with a detailed presentation which outlined that in October 2020, the council agreed to begin a council house delivery programme of up to 500 homes by 2026. Cabinet reports in February 2021 and December 2021 agreed Phase 1 and Phase 2 sites for the programme, however progression of the council house delivery programme had been impacted by a series of global factors: Covid 19, the war in Ukraine and the global energy crisis.

On the 12 July 2023, Cabinet approved an updated business case for the council house delivery programme, including a revised financial model which responded to three challenges for the programme: macro-economic changes had seen both inflation and interest rates rise significantly since the first business case was prepared, the opportunity to revisit both the delivery approach and assumptions to support viability considerations within the programme, and to understand how the programme could support a reduction in the cost of temporary accommodation provision.

A progress update was then provided since January 2024, which saw the conclusion of the procurement exercise to appoint a main contractor to deliver the programme, the development of a delivery pipeline and detailed work undertaken with the main contractor to refine the pipeline, the progression of the first three sites towards the planning application stage with planning applications for all three sites submitted in November 2024, with a further two sites at pre-application planning stage. It was noted that should these sites be granted planning permission, be viable and successful in attaining Homes England Grant and subject to all other contractual agreements and funding gateway approvals, work would start on site in 2025. A further procurement exercise had been undertaken to appoint a Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) provider to deliver the Merrington View and

Spennymoor site. Work was ongoing to prepare a report to Cabinet outlining the operational and management consideration of the programme which would also include a Financial Strategy for a Housing Revenue Account.

With regards to the delivery pipeline, it was originally intended to deliver 500 new build council houses by 2026, however owing to macro-economic factors, the programme would be delivered by 2029. Sites would be delivered in phases, progressing two or three at a time across a rolling programme with any sites that were considered unsuitable for development being removed from the pipeline. The suitability of sites would consider factors including the site topography and elevation, the size of the site, and the scope of the developable area. It was highlighted that if the programme proved to be a viable proposition, it was intended that the programme would be extended beyond 2029 and the number of new homes built would exceed 500.

The Housing Delivery Manager then provided an overview of the progress at the first three sites: Portland Avenue Seaham, Greenwood Avenue Burnhope and Merrington View Spennymoor, noting that that the Portland Avenue, Seaham development was part of a wider local plan allocation being delivered jointly alongside Homes England. In relation to Portland Avenue, Seaham, this would include 33 units consisting of a mix of two bedroom bungalows along with two and three bed houses. In addition, the site would include Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and he confirmed that the planning application had been submitted in November 2024 and that subject to planning approvals and Homes England grant and contractual gateways, work would commence in Spring 2025. Concerning Greenwood Avenue Burnhope this site will consist of 32 units, a mix of two bedroomed bungalows along with two, three and four bedroom houses with a SUDS pond at the bottom Corner of the site. He confirmed that the planning application had been submitted in November 2024 and that work would commence on site in Spring 2025, subject to planning approvals, Homes England grant and contractual gateways. Concerning Merrington View, he confirmed that this site would consist of eight one-bedroomed properties and was an MMC scheme as part of the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) with the planning Application submitted in November with work on site commencing in Spring 2025, subject to planning approvals and contractual gateways

In relation to the wider pipeline, it was envisaged that 372 units would be delivered, however site density had increased significantly and it was expected that the sites in the pipeline would deliver more units than originally anticipated, with delivery monitored against targets. The council would also continue to consider other opportunities as they arise including actively exploring opportunities to the west of the A68 in rural communities.

It was expected that a number of sites originally allocated to the programme had been identified as unsuitable and that this is anticipated to total 197 units with sites having various issues. It was highlighted that the further review of the identified

sites may show that other sites are unsuitable in which case alternative sites would need to be considered.

The Housing Delivery Manager continued by commenting that repurposing and converting surplus buildings within the Council's property portfolio and property acquisitions formed an important part of the delivery programme and in meeting housing needs across the county. He highlighted that current activity as part of the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) would provide 10 units at the former Children's Home in Tow Law and the Registry Office at Bishop Auckland with both of these units completed and ready for occupation by the end of March 2025. He continued by commenting that targeted acquisition were a way to supplement the new build element of the programme and provide an opportunity to meet housing needs in locations where there were limited land opportunities. It was confirmed that targeted acquisitions had taken place historically to meet various housing needs including the general need for affordable housing, the need for temporary accommodation and to provide accommodation for rough sleepers. In relation to the distribution and form of properties, the Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that the properties are distributed across a range of settlements within the county and consist of studio apartments, 1,2,3 and 4 bedroomed properties. It was highlighted that 2 bedroom properties are the largest element of the stock with the range of property sizes reflecting housing need within the county.

In terms of the next steps, the Housing Delivery Manager advised that progression would continue in relation to the first schemes, with further sites brought forward within the pipeline, the continuation of the acquisitions programme and a future report to Cabinet looking at the operational management and maintenance of the properties within the council house delivery programme.

Councillor Heaviside commented on the significant progress made since the report was presented in January 2024 and asked for clarification as to who provided the support in relation to the Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP). The Housing Delivery Manager responded that a specialist support provider had been commissioned to support the SHAP programme and confirmed that Emmaus had been awarded the contract, noting that the scheme would be managed by the Council.

Councillor Heaviside commented that he would seek advice as to whether he needed to declare an interest.

Councillor Currah asked for clarification as to whether sites included in the County Durham Plan that were not in development would be considered under the Council House Delivery Programme. The Housing Delivery Manager advised that a lot of the sites in the County Durham Plan were in private ownership and that the Council House Delivery Programme used sites in Durham County Council ownership. However, the Council were looking at opportunities to purchase sites, in relation to the rural west of the county. He confirmed that if the Council were approached by developers or private landowners, they would explore and consider the offer.

With regards to the Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), Councillor Currah asked about the difference in timeline between this method of construction and conventional methods and concluded by commenting that the SHAP programme was not popular with residents in local communities. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that the difference could be months as with MMC a lot of the construction was done in the factory which could be carried out in bad weather and on multiple units at the same time. He highlighted that the external finishes on MMC properties would provide the look and feel of traditional builds. With regards to the SHAP programme, he would be happy to discuss any concerns/queries outside of the meeting.

Councillor Shaw commented that in 2011 it was intended that there would be a Targeted Delivery Plan for every ward, with fifteen developed and asked whether there had been any progress in the development of these plans. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that Targeted Delivery Plans had not progressed and that there were still the same number of plans. He commented that work had taken place looking at confirming their role with the focus on those already in place. He continued that work had taken place in 2019 on those Targeted Delivery Plans already in place.

Councillor Shaw continued by commenting that no work had taken place in relation to housing needs within the various areas of the county. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that work is undertaken to identify housing needs with housing need being looked at separately. He confirmed that Targeted Delivery Plans are separate to the Housing Delivery Plan.

Councillor Shaw responded that Target Delivery Plans identify outstanding housing need, the housing priorities, within an area. He continued that there are 11,500 requests for housing within the county. He continued that private developers do not build to meet outstanding housing need and that Targeted Delivery Plans would identify where need is within the council area to then focus delivery of the Council House Delivery Programme. He then asked what the split of housing was in relation to the Portland Avenue site at Seaham

With regards to the Portland Avenue site at Seaham, the Housing Delivery Manager responded that the site included the erection of thirty-three dwellings that consisted of six two bed three person bungalows at the southern end of the cul-de-sac, twelve two bed four person houses, six two bed four person 'corner turner' house, five three bed five person houses and four three bed five person 2.5 storey houses. He continued that work had taken place looking at the site layout and local housing need together with the viability of the site. He highlighted that originally, 20 units were identified for the site and that this diversification resulted in a greater mix to meet housing need.

Councillor Shaw added that the site layout moved away from the original design layout which had been mostly bungalows. He was concerned that the Council

House Delivery Programme (CHDP) was doing the same as the private sector and not meeting housing need as there was a shortfall in bungalow provision within the local area. The Housing Delivery Manager referred to the Cabinet report in July 2023 that reported the need for a greater mix of housing in order to get the sites up and running.

Councillor Shaw then asked that as the site now had a greater mix of housing, how would the need for more bungalows be met locally and whether cumulative sums were used. The Housing Delivery Manager responded that if they only looked towards building bungalows, there would be difficulties with the viability of sites, however over the life of the programme, bungalow development would be delivered. He confirmed that cumulative sums could not be used in relation to this locality.

Mr Simons was pleased to see progress in relation to the programme and referred to the sites in the initial stage of the programme where it stated that viability was subject to Homes England grant. He was surprised that these sites were so far down the development process without confirmation of funding. The Housing Delivery Manager explained that it was normal at this stage of the process not to have funding in place and that Homes England would want to see that sites had planning consent before funding was allocated. He confirmed that it was expected that as the schemes were within the required parameters, Homes England would support the projects and provide grant funding.

Mrs Morris commented that the programme seemed academic when Government had stated that a total of 2,210 new homes were to be delivered in the county every year until 2029. The Strategy and Delivery Manager confirmed that the figure had reduced to 2,011 each year, however this was a big increase from the 1,500 new homes that were currently being delivered. He continued by commenting that Durham County Council was sceptical about the sector delivering the new total set by Government as developers cannot deliver the numbers required due to skill shortages. He confirmed that discussions had taken place with developers in relation to penalties and land banking to encourage them to deliver.

Mrs Morris highlighted that she had concerns as the figures from government were not negotiable and asked for confirmation that the Committee would continue to receive updated delivery plans and that when identifying areas of land, they would be looking at different areas of the county. The Strategy and Delivery Manager explained that the CHDP would deliver a small part of the total housing delivery numbers for the county and confirmed that in March a report looking at reviewing the County Durham Plan would be considered. He also confirmed that a new Housing Market Assessment would be produced.

Mrs Morris commented that the Committee would want to see the new County Durham Plan as soon as possible. The Strategy and Delivery Manager confirmed that the review of the plan would be a long process starting at high level first and then down to local level.

Councillor Wood asked for clarification as to how the mix of properties were determined in relation to the various sites and used the example of the Portland Avenue site where one in five units would be a bungalow. He continued that private developers deliver a lower number of bungalows, as they cost more to develop. He asked what the difference would be with the CHDP developments and whether the long-term housing need within an area is being considered. He concluded by commenting that within Pelton, some older people were occupying family homes and that if there were more bungalows available, this would free up family homes.

In relation to identifying housing needs, the Housing Delivery Manager advised that they looked at data from DKO's which identified the type of properties that were bid on within an area with a site needing to be varied in mix of housing. He confirmed that all housing within the CHDP would be affordable not just 30% which was the figure private developers were required to provide. The properties would be managed by Durham County Council and would be built to the required standard and could be adapted to meet the needs of the tenant.

Councillor Wood commented that if density on sites were increasing, there was a danger that this would become more like the private sector with smaller floor space per unit. The Housing Delivery Manager advised that the programme was elevating standards and that the County Durham Plan had shown that developers were not meeting standards and the resulting impact this has. He added that the density on the sites was the best use of the land for the viability of the scheme which would then pay off the borrowing incurred for the programme.

With regards to the Portland Avenue site and the shared driveways, Councillor Wood asked how this would work in practice and why this approach had been used. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that they would have their own points of access and curtilages and that the roads had to be built for access, not to adoptable standards. He continued that the approach of shared driveways could be looked at going forward.

Councillor Stead felt that it was a positive move that the CHDP included bungalow provision as there are a lot of older people living in four-bedroom houses as bungalows are unavailable. He referred to appendix 7 of the report and the fourteen available one-bedroom properties in Stanley and asked for detail in relation to the properties, what would be the cost of bringing them back into use and how quickly this could be done. The Housing Delivery Manager confirmed that the properties were currently in use as part of the acquisitions programme and used by Housing Management colleagues to meet housing needs.

Councillor Moist thanked the officer for the report and presentation and commented that he could see the progress that had been made and the planned delivery in relation to the targets and assumed there would be no delays in relation to the planning process. He noted the monitoring of the targets going forward and the reference that Cabinet would receive detail of performance in relation to targets. He referred to previous minutes which had asked that monitoring information also be

considered by Overview and Scrutiny. He also noted from the information provided that delivery would still be behind target and recommended that future monitoring information be considered by Overview and Scrutiny. He asked for clarification as to whether financially unviable sites would be dropped from the programme and alternative sites considered. He concluded by highlighting the need for the Council to provide affordable homes via this programme and that he would have liked to have seen this progress four to five years ago.

The Housing Delivery Manager advised that the planning process was entirely independent and in relation to monitoring, the Housing Strategy included targets in relation to the scheme. He confirmed that he would be happy to come back to Overview and Scrutiny and provide an update on the development of the scheme and its performance in relation to targets. With regard to site viability, it was explained that the design of the scheme was quite a bit down the line in the development process and it was at this stage when it becomes apparent as to whether a site would be determined as viable or not. He confirmed that the programme would provide affordable homes within the context of the definition used to determine affordable homes within the county.

Councillor Moist added that he was aware that one site previously identified had Japanese Knot Weed and another site planned for bungalows had gradient issues. He highlighted that these issues should be identified quicker so that another suitable site could be identified.

Councillor Batey commented that there was a history of private developers not consulting local Members and highlighted the need for Officers to consult with local Members on the design of future sites in programme. She concluded by highlighting that local Members know the housing need within their local communities.

The Chair agreed with Councillor Batey that it was essential that local Members be consulted.

### **Resolved:**

- i) That the contents of the report and presentation be noted.
- ii) That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive further updates on the progress of the Council House Delivery Programme, including monitoring information on the performance of the programme in relation to delivery targets.

## **7 Supported Housing Improvement Programme - Update**

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth and presentation which provided an update on the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) working with non-commissioned



supported housing providers across County Durham (for copy of report and presentation slides, see file of minutes).

The Housing Team Leader provided Members with a detailed presentation that focused on: the background to the programme; context for County Durham and providers operating in County Durham; SHIP Funding; Objectives and Outputs of the scheme including detail of reviews and inspections undertaken with initial findings, added value, social impact including case studies and what next including details of priorities until March 2026 and the government consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.

The Housing Team Leader explained that there is currently no regulator of non-commissioned supported accommodation with providers being able to set up provision in the county without Local Authority approval. She continued that some providers often set up for commercial gain, buying cheap properties often in deprived locations. She highlighted that this housing supports the most vulnerable and that both nationally and regionally there is an increase in this type of accommodation being provided together with an increase in reports of substandard accommodation. As the tenants require support above and beyond what normal housing providers would provide, if the support is not of the required standard then this type of housing provision can have a detrimental impact on communities, the health and wellbeing of the tenants and public services.

The Housing Team Leader provided detail of the providers operating in the county confirming that there are 600 properties across the county providing this type of accommodation with some having multiple tenants with shared space. She continued that within County Durham there are 20 providers with a total of 754 units with the largest number of units in East Durham, Mid Durham followed by North, North West and South Durham with far fewer properties providing this type of accommodation in Durham City, South East Durham and West Durham.

In relation to funding of the scheme, the Housing Team Leader reminded members that the national scheme had a funding pot of £20m to address poor quality supported housing, improve standards of support and accommodation. She confirmed that Durham was awarded £578,795 to implement the SHIP with funding lasting to March 2025. This funding had been used to establish a multi-disciplinary team consisting of six posts. Concerning the objectives of the scheme

The Housing Team Leader confirmed that a review is being undertaken by the team of the existing provision with 17 of the 20 providers having been reviewed. This involves property inspections being undertaken with 168 to date being completed. In addition, 336 tenant reviews have been completed to validate Housing Benefit decision and ensure tenants are receiving the correct levels of support. These reviews have resulted in 18 claims suspended/cancelled and 4 claims amended. The Housing Team Leader continued by informing members that supported housing is for a maximum period of two years during which support is provided for the tenant to move to independent living, again the review process had resulted in 48 tenants

signing up for Durham Key Options with 5 being moved onto their own tenancy and 6 in band 1 waiting for a property. Concerning property inspections, it was confirmed that 168 had been inspected with 154 failing the first inspection with 83 improving to meet the necessary standards.

The Housing Team Leader then highlighted other activity undertaken by the Team in relation to housing benefit subsidy loss. She explained that subsidy loss is the shortfall in housing benefit payment made to local authorities from the DWP, when the provider is not registered with the Regulator for Social Housing and is set up as a charity, community interest company etc. This had resulted in a £1.6m subsidy loss for DCC on non-commissioned housing in 2023-2024. The SHIP team is actively working to encourage providers to become registered with the Regulator for Social Housing or partner with an existing registered provider to help tackle this issue. As a result of the work of the SHIP it is expected that the subsidy loss has increased at a slower rate in 2024-2025.

In relation to the Gateway approach used by the SHIP Team, the Housing Team Leader explaining that this is the approach used by DCC to manage new and existing providers with processes in place to enable the Council to scrutinise costs, referrals, governance, support and procedures together with the mapping of properties geographically. She continued by highlighting that 25 new approaches had been made since January 2023 with only 2 progressed to provide supported housing in the County. She confirmed that potentially the Gateway approach had saved £114k. Concerning added value and social impact, the Housing Team Leader commented that the training provided by the programme had resulted in better partnership working and collaboration, health and wellbeing support provided at the correct standard, the development of the Non-commissioned Supported Housing Charter which had been co-produced with providers and collaboration with the ASB Teams and police to understand trends and promote initiatives to reduce both ASB and crime. Members were then provided with detail of two case studies.

The Housing Team Leader concluded by highlighting to members a government consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023. The Act had been initiated in response to the challenges linked to the non-commissioned supported housing sector to give local authorities greater control within the sector. The act had come into force in August 2023 with a consultation on the Act expected in early 2025. It was confirmed that as a result of the positive work undertaken by the SHIP, the Corporate Management Team had agreed to fund the programme until March 2026.

The Chair thanked Officers for the report and detailed presentation. He commented that 168 properties had been inspected with 154 failing, 83 had improved to the required standard and 5 properties had been returned to the landlord. He asked as to whether there was further information regarding those that failed and had not improved to the required standard. The Housing Team Leader advised that further inspections would be carried out and enforcement action taken in relation to some

of the providers. She confirmed that further detail would be provided at a future meeting.

Councillor Wood referred to the 40% of non-commissioned supported housing, not to the required standard with the Team having currently reviewed 17 of the 20 providers. He asked if there were any concerns regarding the tenants with the remaining three providers that had not been reviewed and what could be done with regards to ensuring that those providers engage with the Council. The Housing Team Leader confirmed that the relevant officers were carrying out further inspections and that a firmer approach was being undertaken, including enforcement action. She added that they continued to work with landlords and providers to bring properties up to the required standard. She confirmed that by the end of March 2025 the Team would have worked with all 20 providers and from April 2025 onwards reinspections would be ongoing.

Councillor Wood asked for clarification that the measures available via the SHIP programme were separate from Selective Licensing Scheme measures. The Housing Team Leader advised that some properties providing non-commissioned supported housing fall within Selective Licensing areas and as part of the property inspection the Team work closely with the Selective Licensing Team to ensure that landlords had a licence. The Assessment and Awards Manager added that the SHIP programme was voluntary, however there were opportunities to apply pressure from a financial point of view. He highlighted that under Housing Benefit regulations, DCC has the power to review active Housing Benefit claims, so the Council would be able to conduct a review of a live Housing Benefit claim and ensure sufficient care/support etc is in place and progress is being made and if not cancel/suspend any Housing Benefit claim. This wouldn't be the full remit of a SHIP review but is a disincentive should providers refuse to work with the local authority.

Councillor Crute commented that there were worrying parallels with this sector and HMOs with regards to how providers were regulated and held to account and the potential detrimental impact on neighbourhoods surrounding these schemes. With regards to the Government consultation on the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, he acknowledged the tight timescales, however felt it was imperative that the consultation comes back to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that Members have an opportunity to feed into the consultation and raise concerns.

Councillor Crute then highlighted the need for Local Authorities to be given powers to require that providers were registered and asked whether there were any opportunities under Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) in relation to the County Durham Plan. In relation to the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, should the Act not provide Local Authorities the necessary powers to require that providers were registered then the County Council needed to develop the appropriate measures/policy to hold providers to account, ensure the standard of accommodation and quality of support was provided, regulate the number of providers and units available and value for money.

The Housing Team Leader responded that the information coming forward with regards to the consultation and what it would include was limited. The Strategy and Delivery Manager explained that it was a licensing issue and not within the scope of the County Durham Plan. He clarified that with regards to SPDs, there must be a link to something already included within the existing plan and highlighted that SPDs were being abolished as part of the new development plan process.

Councillor Crute commented that he was concerned with loopholes in relation to either the national legislation or any resulting local powers that would provide the opportunity to convert a property or house being used as an HMO to non-commissioned supported accommodation. He continued that the necessary 'checks and balances' needed to be in place to prevent this from happening and allowing landlords to move from one model to another.

Councillor Manchester made reference to the Panorama documentary which had focused on a national organisation operating within the County and commented that whilst My Space no longer provided accommodation in Tow Law, he was aware that they provided accommodation in Crook area. He was under the impression that Durham County Council were no longer making referrals to this provider and asked for clarification. He then asked whether the Team were aware of the Compassionate Care Group that operated in the County. The Housing Team Leader confirmed that referrals to My Space were from outside the County and more intense work had been undertaken in relation to the 3 properties that My Space had within the County. She added that through the Charter, they were asking providers to keep referrals within the County Durham area and only take referrals from Housing Solutions or recognised organisation within the County, this provides more background in relation to individuals, ensures a more controlled process and reduces the impact on other services. She confirmed that the Team were in contact with the Compassionate Care Group who provide accommodation and support for individuals leaving hospital care.

Councillor Shaw commented that 40% of provision was in the East Durham area because of the low property values and highlighted that these areas were in special measures, noting that the poor quality of the housing in these areas and the transient population were adding to the existing issue, which was having a significant impact on local communities. He commented that housing providers build up an evidence base of people who have been excluded from social housing and asked where Local Lettings Agencies sit within this provision. The Housing Team Leader responded that historically the Authority did not have the oversight in relation to this type of provision. The Gateway approach and the introduction of the strategy now provided this oversight and provided a guidance tool for more informed conversations and engagement with new providers coming forward with regards to diversifying away from hotspots and the more densely populated areas. In terms of the Local Lettings Agencies, she confirmed that there were over 100 properties that solely take referrals from Housing Solutions which was the stepping stone to independent living.

Responding to a query from Councillor Currah with regards to new providers and engagement with Durham County Council, the Housing Team Leader advised that a lot of providers do engage with the Authority on a voluntary basis at which point they would be directed to the Gateway process. She confirmed that providers do not have to participate as this is not regulated, however if they choose to go forward without the approval of the Local Authority, then pressure could be applied via the Housing Benefit system.

**Resolved:**

- i) That the contents of the report and presentation be noted.
- ii) That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are engaged within the Government consultation process in relation to the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023.

## **8 Quarter Two Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2024/25**

The Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Resources and Corporate Director of Regeneration Economy and Growth which provided details of the forecast outturn position for quarter 2 revenue and capital for Regeneration, Economy and Growth (REG) as at 30 September 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

Mrs Morris referred to the overspend in relation to Culture Leisure and Sport and asked whether there was any additional support/funding available to assist in reducing the level of overspend, and when the Committee would receive a further update on the overspend situation. The Finance Manager, Resources and Regeneration confirmed that plans were being put in place to mitigate the level of overspend. He advised that two leisure centre sites were now complete which would increase the levels of income achieved. He continued that the overspend could be looked at as a budget pressure and confirmed that the service was looking at measures to increase the levels of income. He concluded by highlighting that update reports would be provided on a quarterly basis to the committee.

**Resolved:**

That the contents of the report be noted.

## **9 Minutes of the County Durham Economic Partnership Board**

The minutes of the County Durham Economic Partnership Board held on 25 September 2024 were noted for information.

## **10 Any Other Business**

The Chair reminded Members that arrangements had been made for an Informal Information Session on the 20 January 2025 focusing on DCC's approach to land management. There was also a further Informal Information Session on the 30 January 2025 providing an opportunity for Members to see the new Place Brand for County Durham, prior to its formal launch. There was also a Special joint meeting with members of the Environment OSC to be held on the 31 January 2025 focusing on the County Durham visitor economy and a Special meeting of the Economy and Enterprise OSC had been arranged for the 25 February 2025 to provide an update on the IES Delivery Plan and an overview of industrial/employment sites in the County.