

Cabinet

16 January 2019

Council Activity Report

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

Councillor Simon Henig, Leader of the Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update on work to support some of the council's key priorities.

Executive summary

- 2 The report provides an update on progress towards delivering some of the council's key priorities.
- 3 This month's report covers:
 - (a) Durham 19 – Year of Culture
 - (b) Selective licensing
 - (c) Reduction in teenage pregnancies
 - (d) Staff wellbeing.

Recommendation

- 4 Cabinet is recommended to note the contents of this update.

Background

- 5 The council undertakes a great deal of work across the county.
- 6 This report offers an overview of some key projects.

Durham 19 – Year of Culture



- 7 Research measuring the volume and value of tourism to Durham has revealed that the county's ambitious tourism targets have been exceeded three years ahead of schedule. Tourism's contribution is now worth £867million to the county's economy.
- 8 The annual study shows that Durham welcomed 19.71 million tourism visits in 2017, a 2.4 percent increase on 2016, with these visitors spending £867 million during their stay – a year-on-year increase of five per cent across the county.
- 9 In addition, the number of jobs supported by the visitor economy also increased with the sector supporting 11,682 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, an increase of five per cent from 2016.
- 10 County Durham clearly has a lot to offer in terms of attractions, accommodation and experience and has seen continued growth and investment in cultural activity by the council and its partners over recent years.
- 11 The tourism industry generates a significant amount of money and is extremely important to the county, so it is vital that we are in a position to fully support and sustain it.

- 12 This year presents an opportunity for Durham to celebrate a 'Year of Culture' to shout about our diverse sporting, cultural, arts and heritage offer at an international, national, regional and local level through a year of openings, activities, festivals, events and anniversaries.
- 13 The Cricket World Cup coming to Durham in 2019, (the second largest spectator sport in the world) is an opportunity to raise Durham's profile at an international level and welcome global audiences. In 2019 we will also celebrate a decade of Lumiere Durham, the UK's largest light festival. Highlights from the installations of the past ten years will be brought back alongside some new works as part of the celebration of a creative event that has quickly become synonymous with Durham.
- 14 Our festivals and events also contribute to a higher national and international profile for Durham, providing reasons to visit, extend length of stay and extending the tourist season.
- 15 Our Year of Culture is being sponsored and supported by the County Durham Cultural Partnership, Visit County Durham and our partners, with events, festivals and arts coming together under one umbrella to present a rich programme of activity which starts this month.
- 16 Furthermore, encouraging more people to discover and engage with Durham's culture and heritage, will generate economic benefits for the local economy, building a cultural legacy for the county which can be enjoyed by residents and visitors long after 2019.

Selective licensing



- 17 The Housing Act 2004 gave local authorities the power to introduce selective licensing schemes for private rented homes in order to tackle

problems resulting from low housing demand, crime, deprivation, migration, poor housing conditions and/or anti-social behaviour.

- 18 Landlords who rent out properties in an area that is subject to selective licensing are required to obtain a licence from the local authority for each of their properties in order to rent them out. This includes landlords who rely on lettings agents to manage their properties on their behalf. This allows local authorities to check whether landlords are “fit or proper” to be a landlord or letting agent, as well as making other stipulations concerning management of the property and appropriate safety measures.
- 19 It is believed that selective licensing can lead to:
 - more reliable, longer term tenancies;
 - better quality and safer property standards;
 - fewer empty properties;
 - reduced levels of homelessness;
 - increased property and rent values;
 - safer and more pleasant areas to live due to lower levels of crime;
 - reduced littering and other anti-social activity.
- 20 Landlords who are registered through the scheme have access to services to help to deal with problem tenants; a tenant referencing scheme to vet prospective tenants; support and advice on how to be a better landlord; and opportunities to join landlords' forums and be involved in the development of future local initiatives.
- 21 There have been three designated selective licensing areas in operation across County Durham – Dean Bank, in Ferryhill; Chilton West, in Chilton; and Wembley, in Easington Colliery.
- 22 The Dean Bank and Chilton West designations came to an end in March 2018 and the Wembley designation is due to expire in June 2019. All three designations will have run for a period of ten years.
- 23 In October, Cabinet heard a report seeking approval in principle to the undertaking of detailed preparatory work with the intention of submitting an application to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for selective licensing designations to cover the whole of County Durham.

- 24 Councillors agreed to provide initial funding of £200,000 to begin work on the scheme and prepare a business case to be presented to a future council meeting. Work has now started to look at the development of the business case and it is hoped that in the New Year the business case will be brought to Cabinet, where approval will be sought to apply to the Secretary of State for countywide implementation.
- 25 The plans have the backing of Durham's Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner (PCVC). Since the proposals were announced, the Cabinet member for strategic housing and assets has appeared on the BBC's Sunday Politics Show alongside the PCVC talking about the council's hopes for the scheme.
- 26 A similar scheme was introduced by Liverpool City Council about four years ago and has seen about 43,000 licences issued to landlords and lead to more than 100 successful prosecutions and a 40 per cent reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- 27 All social housing stock throughout County Durham now meets the Decent Homes standard and it is hoped that a selective licensing scheme will do the same for the private rented sector, so all people who reside in County Durham can live in a decent standard of home.

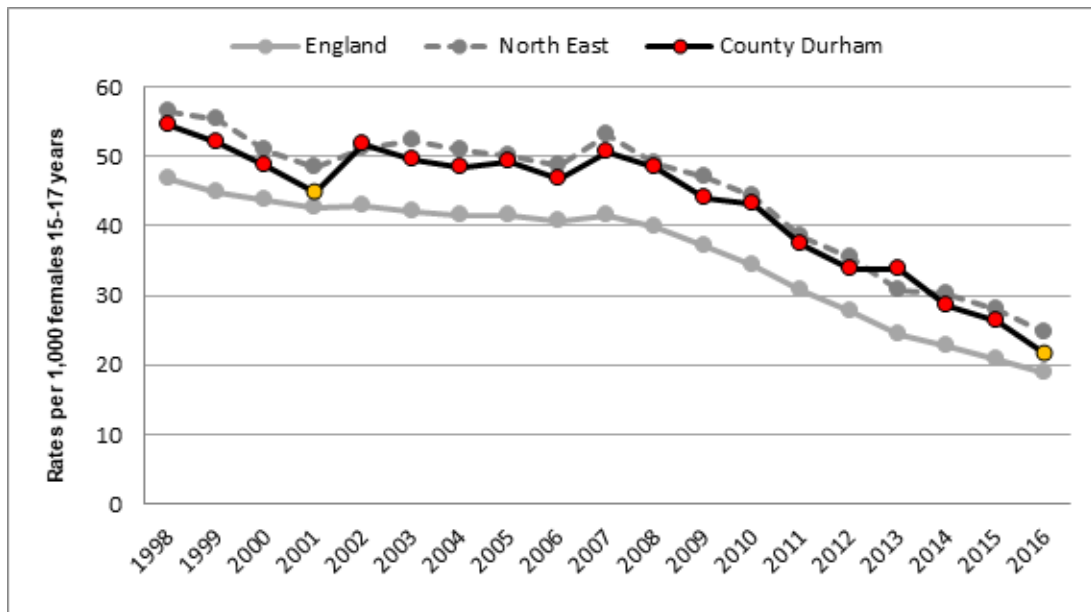
Reduction in teenage pregnancies

- 28 The work of the council and its partners is helping to maintain a downward trend in teenage conceptions. Between 1998 and 2016 the under 18 conception rate in County Durham fell by 60.3 percent, compared to reductions of 56.5 percent for the North East and 59.7 percent for England. The relative gap between England and County Durham has reduced and the rate for County Durham (22 per 1,000) is not significantly different to England (19 per 1,000).

In the year 2016 there were 173 teenage conceptions compared with 499 in 1998 – a reduction of 65 percent.



Teenage conception trends 1998-2016



29 There is a geographical difference in rates across County Durham, with some wards being consistently 20 percent higher for under 18 conception rates than the countywide average. Some wards have made good progress in reducing under 18 conceptions over the past three years while others have experienced no change and some have seen an increasing trend.

30 Within County Durham, seven wards were consistently more than 20 percent higher than the County Durham average for four pooled time periods: 2009-2011; 2010-2012; 2011-2013; and 2012-2014:

- Dawdon
- Deneside
- Easington
- Ferryhill
- Gilesgate
- Peterlee East
- Thornley.

31 In order to address these inequalities, our Public Health team has led on the implementation of the Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Framework across County Durham through the work of the Teenage Pregnancy Steering Group. The framework aims to prevent unplanned pregnancy and develop healthy relationships by working with

stakeholders to co-ordinate a range of preventative interventions that include the delivery of a Mobile Sexual Health Service, Young Person's Portal, Relationship Sex Education programmes and the Young Parent Pathway delivered by the One Point Service.

- 32 The Young Parent Pathway is a 20-week programme that raises parents' confidence and self-esteem and supports the transition for participants back into education, employment and training as well as improving outcomes for their children by incorporating the Best Start in Life key messages. To date, more than 75 percent of young parents have successfully progressed into education, employment or training and more than 10 percent of parents have volunteered in family centres.
- 33 In addition to the Young Parent Pathway, the Teenage Pregnancy Steering Group has taken a very proactive approach to improving the quality of relationship and sex education in educational establishments. The Council's school improvement service has been commissioned by the council to support secondary schools in reviewing and developing their Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) provision and practice with the aim being to ensure all pupils are able to access high quality RSE provision in an educational setting. To date, 27 secondary establishments, including mainstream secondary, special schools, secure services, pupil referral unit and an FE college, have taken advantage of the support on offer.
- 34 An RSE review and quality standards framework has been developed to include the following areas:
- leadership and management
 - policy development
 - CPD for school staff and governors
 - pupil voice
 - curriculum review and development
 - parent consultation
 - partnership working (e.g. with school nurse teams)
 - signposting and links with appropriate services/agencies
- 35 From this month, this work will also include support for primary education, particularly around the transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 and there will be greater emphasis on vulnerable groups and developing networks in order to support more schools.

Staff wellbeing



- 36 We're continuing to take steps to support mental health and wellbeing among our staff.
- 37 This has recently included signing up to become a Time to Change employer, which means we have agreed to introduce positive changes to how we think and act about mental health in the workplace. Mental health awareness training is also planned for management team and strategic managers.
- 38 Building on this, an employee health and wellbeing action plan is being developed to give further focus for this area of work. This will include actions at all levels of the organisation such as: including health and wellbeing on management team agendas; increased training for managers; the recruitment and training of staff to become health advocates to promote health and wellbeing within teams; review of staff policies to provide further support; and continued promotion of activities to encourage good health and wellbeing such as walking and running groups.
- 39 Our commitment to staff wellbeing is further supported by the work undertaken throughout 2018 towards achieving the Silver North East Better Health At Work Award, which included sessions on being sugar smart, alcohol awareness, mental health awareness, stress resilience, cancer awareness sessions and activities and taster sessions to encourage staff to become more active. Statistics show that Better

Health at Work Award participants reported a reduction in sickness absence by more than three days in 2015/16.

- 40 Throughout the year we also recognise the achievements of staff in the form of instant recognition awards from managers as well as our annual awards for learner of the year, unsung hero, innovation, team of the year, employee of the year and a special recognition award.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Not applicable.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable.

Staffing

Not applicable.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

Not applicable.

Procurement

Not applicable.