

**Cabinet**

**16 October 2018**

**Council Activity Report**

**Ordinary Decision**



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**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) Exam results
  - (b) Highways update
  - (c) Equalities update
  - (d) Health and 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

## Exam results

- 7 Supporting the next generation to achieve their best is at the heart the services we provide for our children and young people, particularly so our school staff and education teams.
- 8 Over the past few weeks, many young people across County Durham will have embarked on further and higher education courses after successfully gaining the required A level and GCSE qualifications at our schools and colleges.
- 9 Once again, our results have been excellent and we are incredibly proud of our children and young people for their achievements as well as the staff, parents and carers who have supported them.
- 10 **A level** results have been steadily improving every year since 2016, with more students achieving A\* to B grades and more students getting into their first-choice university.
- 11 We are also excelling when compared to the national picture. The average grade for A level students in County Durham is now a B minus, compared to the national average of a C plus.
- 12 Nationally, there has also been a fall in the number of students achieving a B or above in maths, English and science. However, County Durham is bucking the trend, with the number of young people gaining these qualifications rising from 10 per cent last year to 12 per cent.
- 13 At **GCSE** level, there have been significant improvements in the academic performance of disadvantaged pupils, while Children Looked After excelled this year.
- 14 Overall, schools in County Durham have maintained their success from last year, with the proportion of pupils achieving success at grade 4 and above in both English and maths currently at 60 per cent.
- 15 This matches last year's performance, which itself represented a significant improvement from 56 per cent in 2017. The average attainment score for both subjects has also increased.

- 16 The overall attainment 8 score for pupils, meanwhile, has risen again to 44.7 from 44.4 last year. This is a measure of a pupil's average grade across a set of eight subjects.
- 17 Disadvantaged attainment 8 has significantly improved to 40.4 compared to 35.5 in 2018.
- 18 Results for Children Looked After were also exceptionally good this year.
- 19 At Key Stage 2, there was a significant increase across the board for Children Looked After. Sixty-three per cent achieved the expected standard in reading and maths, a 21 per cent increase for both subjects from 2018. Fifty-four per cent achieved expected standards in reading, writing and maths, a 19 per cent increase from 2018. All measures were above the national averages for 2018 and are expected to be above again for 2019.
- 20 There were also improvements for Children Looked After at Key Stage 4. English outcomes at grade 4 or above were broadly in line with 2018, when there had been a 17 per cent increase, while in maths, there was a five per cent increase.
- 21 The percentage achieving grade 5 or above in both English and maths increased from 2018, while 25 per cent achieved grade 4 or above in both English and maths, a 7 per cent increase from 2018. Four young people achieved grade 6 or above in English, maths or both, and two young people achieved grade 7 in English and maths. One individual gained grade 9 in English language – the first grade 9 within the virtual school.
- 22 Our primary-age pupils, meanwhile, are meeting or exceeding national standards in many areas, including phonics for some of our youngest pupils.
- 23 Reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 1 is above the national average standard and at Key Stage 2, we are either meeting or exceeding the national average standard for writing, maths and grammar.

## Highways update



- 24 The adopted highways network in County Durham is the council's largest and highest value asset. It includes 3,792 kilometres of carriageway which is used every day by millions of residents, businesses and visitors, making it fundamental to economic and social activity across the county.
- 25 Demand for maintenance and improvement work is, therefore, significant and this year we have already seen a number of major transport improvement schemes come to fruition while work has also begun on a number of others.
- 26 Among those schemes to reach completion this year was a project to improve safety at the A19/A179/B1280 junction at Sheraton near Wingate. Work began in October 2018 and has seen the installation of traffic lights and introduction of a 40mph speed limit. This has helped to prevent traffic queuing on the northbound sliproad and onto the A19 and also made it safer for drivers wishing to turn right towards Hartlepool. Resurfacing work to create an anti-skid surface was completed last month.
- 27 Meanwhile, in June of this year, a major works scheme began at Junction 61 of the A1(M). In order to support the Integra 61 development, which will see the creation of a large-scale logistics and manufacturing site, we are carrying out work to increase capacity on the surrounding roads and improve safety. Improvements at the junction, which links the A1(M) to the A177 and A688 south of Bowburn, includes adding new lanes and widening existing ones, installing new traffic lights at the neighbouring service station and improving facilities for

pedestrians. It is anticipated that the work will be complete by spring 2020.

- 28 Like services across the council, our highways team is always looking for new and innovative ways to carry out its work and, since 2018, we have been working in partnership with Rainton Construction and MacRebur to trial 'plastic roads'. We were the first authority in the region to try out the new technology, which sees waste packaging and insulation materials that would not normally be recycled, turned into a plastic crumb that can be mixed into the asphalt used on road surfaces. This reduces the amount of bitumen that is required to hold the asphalt together and reduces the carbon footprint of road resurfacing by, on average, a tonne of carbon dioxide for every tonne of bitumen that would have been used.
- 29 So far, 22,477 square metres of highway network have been resurfaced using the new technology, including sections of the A689 at Sedgefield, the A68 at Toft Hill and roads in and around Murton.
- 30 The area covered equates to 100 tonnes of plastic on our roads – or 900,000 plastic shopping bags. Using single use plastics to resurface our roads also supports our pledge to divert plastics that are difficult to recycle from incineration and landfill while reducing carbon emissions. Single use plastic will be used on all upcoming resurfacing works across the county and we continue to look for further opportunities to improve our highways work, including investigating the use of new materials.
- 31 Throughout the year, our highways services team and its contractors deliver hundreds of highway schemes across the county. These schemes help maintain the highways network, keep it in a safe condition for road users and contribute towards addressing a £174 million backlog.
- 32 More than £24 million will be invested during the current financial year in schemes which will include resurfacing about 190km of carriageway and 150km of footpaths, replacing 200 obsolete street lighting columns and carrying out essential maintenance works on 46 bridges and other structures.
- 33 From October to April, the team delivers a 24/7 winter maintenance service with an annual budget of £4.2 million. This comprehensive service aims to keep traffic moving safely and minimise delays to enable people to continue to go about their daily activities whatever the weather.
- 34 During the winter season, we will salt the roads between 80 and 100 times, depending on weather forecasts and conditions, and can pre-salt

45 per cent of the road network in less than three hours via a dedicated fleet of 37 power gritters. Crews also work to clear footpaths following heavy snowfall and prolonged icy conditions in priority areas such as town centres and busy shopping areas.

- 35 We start the winter with 42,000 tonnes of rock salt stored in nine depots strategically located across the county. Initial stock levels are sufficient for all but the harshest winters. However, stocks are replenished if necessary, in order to enable the service to be continuously delivered throughout the season.
- 36 Working with partner organisations, the service has also implemented part-time 20mph speed limits outside schools in the county. This work has been incredibly well received, with schemes introduced at the county's 66 highest priority schools. A further six schools have benefitted from the project this year, with the scheme costing around £1 million in total.
- 37 As well as helping to slow traffic around schools, these part-time speed limits aim to encourage parents and pupils to adopt alternative means of transport to school, for example, walking and cycling, in order to improve health and wellbeing and protect the environment.

## **Equalities update**

- 38 The council's efforts to ensure equality in all aspects of its work are far reaching. We want to do all we can to make sure that we treat everyone fairly but we also have a legal obligation to do so under the Equality Act 2010.
- 39 The act protects people from being treated less favourably because they have a protected characteristic. These characteristics are identified as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 40 The legislation applies to service delivery, employment, education, access and adjustments for people with disabilities, pay gaps and much more. It also applies where council functions are carried out by a third party such as a contractor.
- 41 As a public authority, the council must also pay due regard to the public sector equality duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.
- 42 As well as providing advice and support to services on equalities issues relating to service and policy changes, complaints and legal challenges, the council's work programme covers the following:

## *Employment*

- (a) The council is a Disability Confident Employer, achieving level two of a three-stage nationally recognised accreditation scheme which encourages employers to recruit and retain people with disabilities for their skills and talent. The authority is in the process of applying to retain level two status, with a view to applying for level three status of Disability Confident Leader shortly afterwards. Having level three status is increasingly a requirement for funding applications and only five other regional organisations currently operate at this level.
- (b) The council is part of the **Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme** which is helping it ensure that LGBT staff are accepted without exception in the workplace. Stonewall has carried out a review of the council's HR policies to ensure they are LGBT inclusive and feedback was favourable.
- (c) On 30 April this year, the council hosted the **Stonewall North East Workplace Equality Index (WEI) Awards** event. The WEI is a benchmarking tool designed by Stonewall for employers to measure their progress on lesbian, gay, bi and trans inclusion in the workplace.

Attendance at the event was mainly public sector and included the 11 regional employers featured in the WEI top 100 Index including; Newcastle City Council, Sunderland City Council, Northumberland County Council, Northumbria Police, North East Ambulance Service, Teesside University, Home Group, Your Homes Newcastle, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and Virgin Money. There were also 14 other diversity champions from across the region including Durham County Council, several NHS trusts and regional universities.

## *Partnership working*

- (d) The council works with Durham Police and other partners to identify and tackle hate crime and analyse data. Representatives from Durham and Darlington councils, the Police Commissioner's office, Crown Prosecution Service, community and victim support organisations and Durham University take a multi-agency approach to addressing local issues.
- (e) A **Durham Equality Partnership** has also recently been established with partners including Durham County Council, Durham Police, Durham University, the Prison Service and

Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue to facilitate more joined up work.

- (f) The council has a **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Inclusion team** which provides advice and support to the GRT community, attends community safety events and the GRT South West Durham forum, which plans and manages any issues with temporary stopovers and unauthorised encampments.

## Events

43 The council's approach to key annual events such as **Durham Pride** and **Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD)** also demonstrates its commitment to the public sector equality duty.

- (a) **Durham Pride UK** is a registered charity which began with Durham's first small Pride event in 2014. The event has grown each year, with this year's event attracting an estimated 20,000 people. At least 3,000 people took part in the parade from Palace Green to the Sands.



partners including Durham University, Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, Durham Constabulary and the Police Crime and Victims Commissioner.

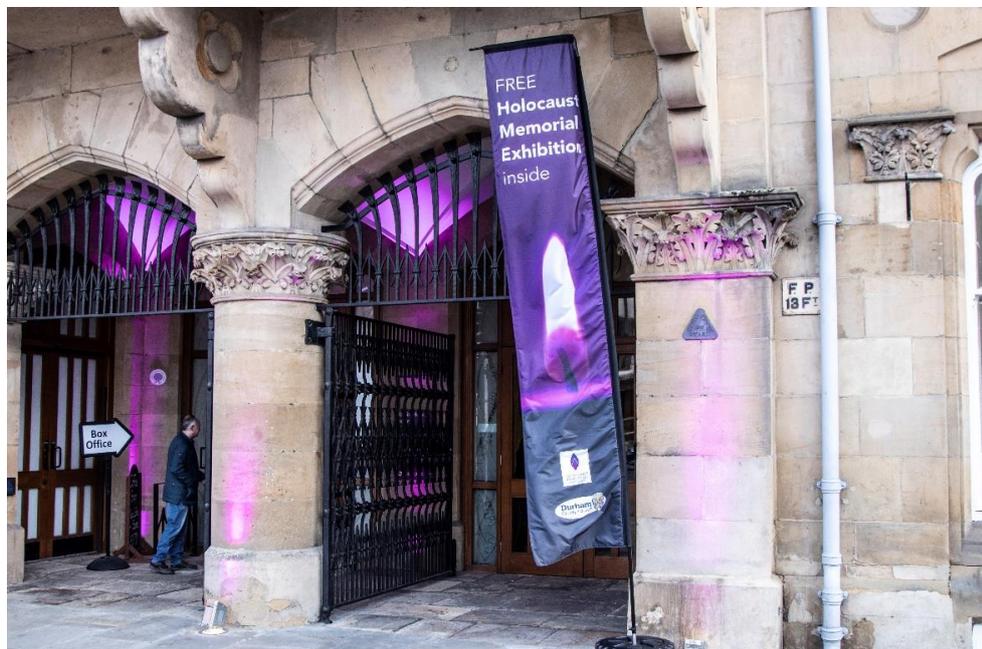


- (b) **Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD)** is the international day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust and other genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. It takes place on 27 January each year and marks the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in 1945.
- (c) The county's **HMD** commemorations were held across the weekend of 25 to 27 January and included a commemoration at Durham Cathedral for schools and a community event at Bishop Auckland Town Hall. The event featured a GRT Porrajmos exhibition, dance performances by King James I Academy, a presentation on hate crime by students from The Hermitage Academy, and a talk by Holocaust survivor Eva Clarke. Artwork was produced by King James I Academy and St Anne's primary school. The Town Hall was lit up purple, symbolising the colours of the Holocaust Memorial Trust.

Both events were extremely successful and were covered by the local media.

A Holocaust Memorial Service also took place at St Anne's Church, Bishop Auckland and, on 25 January, the council's Education Equalities Team hosted a joint event in partnership with the cathedral and local schools. There were various workshops and the afternoon included a talk by Holocaust survivor Eva Clarke. Two hundred students from nine schools attended the event along with 20 trainee teachers.

- (d) Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 will mark 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and events to mark the anniversary are currently being planned.



### *Regeneration work*

- 44 Making council buildings and public areas accessible to all is embedded in our regeneration work.
- 45 A recent audit of the North Road area of Durham City prepared ahead of the redevelopment of the bus station and the recent opening of The Riverwalk was used as a pilot in order to understand the access issues and potential barriers for disabled pedestrians.
- 46 The audit will help inform future improvements and maintenance of this area of the city and shape the design process for the proposed new bus station.
- 47 It is now proposed to replicate this approach across the city and areas to audit have been identified as Market Place, Freemans Quay, Milburngate Riverside and New Elvet.
- 48 There is also a commitment to explore ways in which access audits can be embedded into countywide regeneration projects such as preparing the business case for investment into the town centre in Bishop Auckland as part of the Future High Streets Fund.

### **Health and wellbeing**

- 49 One of the council's priorities is to help residents live long and independent lives. The following provides an overview of health and wellbeing initiatives which the council and its partners are delivering to support this aim.
- 50 Keeping children and young people active over the summer is important. Children and young people aged from five to 18-years-old who are active for at least 60 minutes a day benefit from better general health, stronger bones and muscles, and higher levels of self-esteem.
- 51 In order to support this, Durham County Council's leisure centres offered a wide range of holiday activities over the summer – from multi-sports camps and snorkelling to learning to swim, there was something for every child to enjoy.
- 52 Multi-sport camps offered youngsters the opportunity to try a whole range of activities including tennis, dodgeball, swimming and cricket. Learning new sports not only helps children to get active, it also helps them to build their confidence and try a sport they had never thought about before in a safe environment.

- 53 Swimming crash courses and skill improvement sessions, meanwhile, have helped children build their confidence in the pool. Children took part in a week of swimming lessons focused on developing their swimming skills and stroke techniques.



- 54 For children interested in discovering what is beneath the water, fin and snorkelling sessions taught the basics of swimming with fins and snorkels.
- 55 The introduction of holiday pool timetables during the summer means there is more time for swimming pool fun sessions. Suitable for all ages the family sessions feature rafts and floats.
- 56 Disney fans enjoyed Toy Story-themed swimming sessions, inspired by the magic of Disney storytelling. Each session featured a host of much-loved characters and ten fun-packed activities perfect for the whole family, from the Alien crane game to Jessie's Lasso fun.
- 57 Young people aged between two and six joined Brock the Badger and his friends for Ready, Set, Splash sessions, which include 30 minutes of instructor-led fun and 30 minutes of free play.
- 58 Older children, aged from eight to 14, took on pool based inflatable challenges to see who can make it to the other side without getting wet.
- 59 With the arrival of autumn, our focus widens to include encouraging adults to think about getting fitter and healthier. To stay healthy, adults

aged 19 to 64 should try to do at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity such as cycling or brisk walking or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity.

- 60 We offer a range of opportunities to support residents in doing so, including a Back to School offer of a free seven-day pass in our leisure centres. Furthermore, customers who signed up for a Direct debit gym membership at one of the county's 12 council-run leisure centres during the last few days of September will pay nothing until the middle of November. The offer also includes a one-to-one appointment, access to the gym, free swimming, a personal programme and a range of fitness classes.
- 61 The council is also running a free eight-week Sofa2Cycle course, offering cycling advice and basic maintenance tips to help residents build their to get on their bike. This is in addition to our free weekly walking and cycling programme.
- 62 And, in addition, Ways to Wellbeing will be launching a new quarterly programme in October to support people with their mental health.

### ***Campaigns***

- 63 The autumn and winter period also sees the council working to improve and protect the health and wellbeing of residents through the delivery of a number of campaigns which promote healthy lifestyle choices. These include:

- (a) **Smoking** - this month sees the return of the annual Stoptober campaign encouraging smokers to quit for 31 days in October. The campaign is based on research that shows if you can stop smoking for 28 days, you are five times more likely to stay smoke-free for good.

The initiative was launched in September to encourage smokers to prepare to quit from 1 October, although work to encourage smokers to quit continues throughout the month.

In County Durham, a coordinated effort from a range of partners including public health, the NHS, commissioned services, pharmacies and health visitors is taking place to support



people to become free from tobacco dependency.

This work has included a range of Stoptober publicity materials including press releases, magazine articles for residents and digital promotions. Fresh, the regional programme to tackle smoking, organised events at supermarkets in Stanley and Peterlee to engage face-to-face with smokers and encourage them to quit. In addition, Smokefree Life, the specialist stop smoking service, has arranged coffee mornings around the county to provide additional face-to-face engagement to support people who have signed up to a quit attempt during Stoptober in maintaining their motivation throughout the month. We are also been holding information events with council staff to provide further support.

- (b) **Mental health** – This month has also seen the launch by Public Health England of the Every Mind Matters campaign, which aims to support everyone in feeling more confident in taking action to look after their mental health and wellbeing by promoting a range of self-care actions.

The campaign launched on 7 October, just a few days before World Mental Health Day on 10 October. Work will now take place to explore how the campaign can be supported alongside the council's existing commitment to the Time to Change movement, which works to change the way we all think and act about mental health.

To support World Mental Health Day, a Healthy Business Strategy is to be launched. This will outline how the council will work with local businesses to develop workforce mental health and wellbeing training and also support and reduce the stigma associated with poor mental health. World Mental Health Day will also be supported within Durham County Council with a range of information and activities for staff on the importance of good mental health and wellbeing and the range of support available.

- (c) **Alcohol** – Another key area of work for public health is raising awareness of sensible levels of alcohol intake and two forthcoming campaigns are set to support this priority.

During Alcohol Awareness Week next month, partners will work together to raise awareness of the harms – specifically a range of cancers – caused by alcohol.

Alcohol Awareness Week will be closely followed by the launch of Dry January, the month-long challenge to encourage people to

take a break from alcohol following the festive season. It is a national campaign run by Alcohol Change. However, the campaign isn't just about January, it aims to help people reset their relationship with alcohol for the long-term.



Last year, more Dry January sign-ups were driven by Durham County Council than any other local authority. The campaign was aligned with the council's Better Health at Work programme, with workplace champions engaging face-to-face with staff. External promotions also took place to encourage the public to sign up with regional press releases, social media and sharing of messages at a local level.

Alcohol Awareness Week and Dry January are promoted by Balance, a regional organisation which works to encourage people to reduce their consumption of alcohol and highlight the impact drinking has on the region.

- (d) **Winter wellness** – NHS England and Public Health England's **Help us help you** brings together a range of messages about flu immunisation, staying well in winter, NHS 111, community pharmacy and GP hours. The aim is to highlight how people can help the NHS help them stay well, prevent an illness getting worse, take the best course of action, and get well again sooner.

In County Durham, the campaign will be supported throughout the winter by sharing messages through a range of channels including social media, magazine articles for County Durham residents and carers and digital advertising

A key focus of the campaign is the promotion of flu vaccinations to protect those at increased risk of flu and its complications. Communications are being issued through a range of channels to encourage those who are eligible to take up the vaccination this year to do so.

In addition, the council is encouraging carers and eligible staff who provide close personal care to vulnerable residents to take up their flu vaccination this year. This will reduce the chances of getting flu and spreading it to the people they care for.

### **Background papers**

- None

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**Contact:** Michelle Atkinson

Tel: 03000 268 049

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **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.