

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

22 September 2023

County Durham Partnership Update



Report of Corporate Management Team

Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

Electoral division affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP). The report also includes updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

Executive summary

- 2 The **County Durham Partnership event** this year will take place on 17 November and will focus on celebrating 10 years of health and wellbeing in the local authority and Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- 3 The **Health and Wellbeing Board** agreed the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-28 at their meeting in May 2023. The plan is underpinned by evidence in the Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment and focussed on health and wellbeing, which is influenced by a range of factors and the wider determinants of health.
- 4 All of the seven cabinets in the north-east agreed to move forward with the **Devolution** deal for the North East. It is hoped, we will hear later this year that the parliamentary order to create the new Combined Authority will be laid. A mayor for the region will then be elected in May 2024.

- 5 The Council's **community engagement review** has now been completed. This was subject to further countywide consultation with stakeholders and recommendations for a revised community engagement function have recently been agreed at Cabinet.
- 6 The **fun and food programme** delivered 143 projects across the County over the two-week Easter holiday period. During May half term, an additional 60 projects being delivered across the county.
- 7 **CONTEST: The UK's Strategy for Countering Terrorism 2023** was published on 18 July. The aim of CONTEST is to reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK, its citizens and interests overseas, so people can live freely and with confidence.
- 8 The **Government's Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan** was launched on 27 March to tackle anti-social behaviour. The Durham Force Area are one of the 16 Trailblazer sites who will receive government funding over 2 years.
- 9 In June, we held the County Durham Partnership Forum where we discussed the work that is taking place in relation to anti-social behaviour in conjunction with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Recommendation

- 10 COSMB is recommended to:
 - (a) note the contents of this update.

Background

- 11 The **County Durham Partnership** including the board and forum (which bring together the board and local communities), five partnerships (**Health and Wellbeing Board, Safe Durham Partnership, Economic Partnership, Environment and Climate Change Partnership** and **County Durham Together Partnership**), **Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership** and the **Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership, Better Together VCS Forum** and all **Area Action Partnerships** lead on key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

County Durham Partnership board and forum

- 12 The **County Durham Partnership** Board met in May and July.
- 13 At the May meeting, we started the discussion in relation to planning our annual County Durham Partnership event to celebrate 10 years of Health and Wellbeing Boards and marking 10 years since Public Health functions moved to local authorities from NHS Primary Care Trusts.
- 14 Meetings continue to have regular updates from Thematic Chairs to concentrate on key areas of their work for the County Durham Partnership. The May meeting looked on the work of the **County Durham Together Partnership**. The vision of County Durham Together is about working with communities, especially those most in need, making sure they are at the heart of decision making, building on their existing skills, knowledge, experience and resources to support everyone to thrive and to live happy, healthy and connected lives. The meeting focused on utilising the momentum and lessons learned in supporting communities through the Covid pandemic and moving forward based on the Approach to Wellbeing, to achieve better outcomes for communities and those most in need.
- 15 The importance of embedding the County Durham Together (CDT) approach into our statutory pieces of work such as the Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment (JSNAA) was highlighted. County Durham are one of the only places in the country thinking about our community assets and strengths in the JSNAA.

16 At the July meeting, the thematic focus was the **Health and Wellbeing Board** with discussion around the NHS Joint Forward Plan and the importance of one of the key roles of the Integrated Care System to join up Health and social care.

17 We also received an update on the work of the 15 Family Hubs across the County. 75 Local authorities, including County Durham, received additional funding to develop its Family Hubs and Start for Life offer.



18 The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Education (DfE) launched a three-year Family Hubs and Start for Life (SfL) programme to deliver a step-change in outcomes for babies, children, young people, parents, and carers. The aim is to provide a system wide model of providing high-quality, joined-up, whole-family support services. Family Hubs will deliver these services from conception, through a child's early years until they reach the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities).

19 The outcome of the Community Engagement review and next steps were also shared.

20 In June 2023, **the County Durham Partnership Forum** took place at the Horden Welfare Centre, a space used by all from the Horden Together Partnership, creating a methodology for place-based working and supporting the community. The focus of the meeting was to celebrate 10 years of the Advice in County Durham Partnership (AICD), who are the one remaining advice partnerships in the country from a Big Lottery funded national Citizens Advice project in 2013. Achievements over the last 10 years have included providing 7,000 people with access to training, supporting collaborative projects on specific issues and gaps in provision, preparing the county for the roll out of Universal Credit, and the Stanley Advice Hub, which has helped over 8,800 clients over 5 years.

21 A workshop focused on what we can do to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) across the County, priority areas include making reporting ASB easier, listening to the victim's voice, targeting hotspot areas, diversionary activities for young people and improvements in communication, including highlighting good news stories.

- 22 A range of AAP projects was also outlined arising from a need to tackle ASB, including:
- (a) Section 59 Notices, drones, barriers and Young Mechanics projects to reduce nuisance off-road vehicles.
 - (b) Purchasing and upgrading CCTV cameras, improved lighting, installing lockable gates and clearing undergrowth and specific partnership working to make people feel safer.
 - (c) Diversionary activities for young people.
- 23 Feedback from the workshop will contribute to the development of a delivery plan which supports the County Durham ASB Strategy.

County Durham Partnership event

- 24 The **County Durham Partnership** event will take place on 17 November and will focus on celebrating 10 years of health and wellbeing in the local authority and Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- 25 It will coincide with Lumiere, the light festival which has taken place in Durham, every 2 years, since 2009. It will take place this year from 16-19th November.

Review of Community Engagement

- 26 Following agreement by Cabinet in March 2022, consultants ERS were appointed to undertake an impartial and unbiased review of the Council's community engagement functions including the work of AAPs. The review commenced in June 2022, and the final report detailing the consultant's findings and recommendations, was subject to further countywide consultation with stakeholders.
- 27 The majority of respondents supported incremental, rather than whole scale change, and to build on the significant strengths of the current AAP model. Recommendations for a revised community engagement function have recently been agreed at Cabinet.
- 28 The new model will deliver Local Networks which will:
- (a) Attract new participation and places, with the emphasis on creating and supporting local networks in communities that are increasingly essential at a time of increased pressures on residents and decreasing public resources.
 - (b) Align to the current boundaries (with the potential depending on the final details of the boundary Review) to align Local Network boundaries to those of Elected Members.

- (c) Repurpose and better utilise the AAP Forum to a new rebranded Durham Community Network (c15,000 members) with increased use of new and traditional engagement tools to attract involvement of a greater number, and broader range, of residents and local stakeholders.
 - (d) Adopt of a more strategic approach to the work of the Local Networks, with a reduced number of meetings per year, and through the development of Local Network Plans. A 4-year planning cycle that will provide the means for more strategic action and assurance for applicants.
 - (e) Have a closer working relationship with the County Durham Partnership and its Thematic Partnerships.
 - (f) Provide opportunities to attract new participation by carrying out focussed engagement/neighbourhood planning activities, in particular, with communities identified in the Local Plan, as a consequence of enhanced team capacity.
 - (g) Undertake a significantly simplified funding process for Neighbourhood and Strategic Budgets, including no decisions being taken at Local Panels on elected Members' Neighbourhood Budgets.
- 29 New governance including Terms of Reference will clearly define the purpose, structure and functions of the Local Networks. It will provide in detail eligibility criteria, roles and responsibilities of Panel members and robust processes around recruitment and selection of Panel members to deliver improved assurance that Local Network Panels will be non-political.
- 30 AAPs will continue to operate as Area Action Partnerships until 31 March 2025, and on 1 April 2025 they will assume their new identity as Local Networks.

Devolution deal for the North East

- 31 Following an eight-week consultation earlier this year, where we asked residents, businesses and other stakeholders to give their views on the proposed scheme, respondents welcomed the proposed increase in regional power, a greater profile for the North East, and closer working arrangements among key organisations.
- 32 In addition to members of the public responding to the survey, a number of key organisations from around the region submitted responses lending their support to the deal. These included private businesses, voluntary and community sector organisations, trade unions,

educational institutions, sports clubs and public sector bodies who welcomed the proposed investment and opportunities the deal could provide.

- 33 In total, it is expected to provide £4.2 billion of additional investment to the region over 30 years, including a £1.4bn investment fund alongside significant funding for transport, education and skills, housing and regeneration. The deal would involve the creation of a new mayoral combined authority covering County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland, and is projected to create 24,000 additional jobs in the area and unlock £5 billion additional private sector investment into the region.
- 34 The formation of the new combined authority would not impact on any of the services delivered by the seven local authorities involved. However, the North of Tyne Combined Authority, covering Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland, and the North East Combined Authority covering County Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland, would both cease to operate.
- 35 The deal announced with government also includes scope for the region to enter into 'trailblazer' negotiations to enable the North East to play a leading role in further devolution of powers and investment in the future.
- 36 A summary of the consultation findings has been presented to the respective Cabinets of each of the seven constituent local authorities and two combined authorities and the findings will be presented to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to consider before laying an order in Parliament to establish the new combined authority.
- 37 Subject to these steps, it is expected that an election to appoint a new mayor would take place in May 2024, at which point the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority would come into effect.

Advice in County Durham

- 38 The Advice in County Durham (AiCD) Partnership held two celebratory events in June for their 10-year anniversary of when the Partnership first formed back in 2013. The Partnership membership has now expanded to over 180 partner organisations over the years. The two events in Murton and Stanley attracted over 140 delegates who came to celebrate the achievements and successes over this period.



Celebrating the tenth anniversary of AiCD

- 39 The Advice Partnership consists of members of the VCSE sector, social enterprise and statutory sectors that underpin and are representative of the work going on across the county, AiCD continue to work with partners to support communities around the 'Cost of Living' which continues to be a key focus, by facilitating and informing organisations working to create a coordinated approach to ensure that there is 'no wrong door' for anyone seeking advice and support.
- 40 AICD are pleased to be taking the lead in preparation of Universal Credit Migration which began its rollout in County Durham at the end of July 2023. AICD are hosting a conference which will consist of both national speakers and local providers in September, to inform and highlight potential issues to support stakeholder partners around how that will affect the residents of County Durham.
- 41 Our key focus is to ensure that by working collaboratively all key partners will be able to support individuals to get the right support and advice through our 'No Wrong Door' ethos during this challenging transitional period.

Poverty Action Strategy and Plan for County Durham

- 42 A Poverty Action Strategy and Plan for County Durham has been in place and regularly reviewed since 2015.
- 43 Following a review, the current version has been in place since November 2022. The vision is **'to work together with communities so**

fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation in the county’.

- 44 The action plan contains four main objectives:
- (a) Use Intelligence and data to target support to low income household
 - (b) Reduce the financial pressures on people facing or in poverty
 - (c) Increase individual, household and community resilience to poverty
 - (d) Reduce barriers to accessing services for those experiencing financial insecurity
- 45 Initiatives include the expansion of ‘That Bread and Butter Thing’ to now cover 15 sites across County Durham, which are also starting to offer wrap around financial support as part of the provision.
- 46 Continued support for residents with their Council Tax bill includes the continued 100% Local Council Tax Reduction scheme (meaning many claimants have zero Council Tax to pay). DCC are in the minority of local authorities to offer this. For those who do not qualify for the full 100% reduction and have a balance to pay there is a £75 top up payment they automatically receive.
- 47 The Household Support Fund is currently in year 4, with over £9million provided in funding from central Government being issued to those residents who need it most.
- 48 Following the provision of the Warm Spaces Network project last winter, which provided local people with a place to go and keep warm and enjoy a little company, discussion will take place at the Poverty Action Steering Group in relation to plans for the forthcoming winter.

Humanitarian Support programme

- 49 The **humanitarian support team** continues to support refugee families across County Durham.
- 50 The Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme enable residents to volunteer accommodation and offers a route to safety for individuals and families who want to come to the UK and who have someone here willing to provide a home. Through this scheme, the council has supported nearly 600 guests and more than 275 sponsor households to provide a warm welcome to the County. County Durham residents have

made the largest number of accommodation offers in the north east, reflecting the generosity of the County's communities.

- 51 In June 2023, the humanitarian support team welcomed six Afghan families to the County as part of the council's resettlement programme. Under the scheme, the Afghan families (10 adults and 16 children), who arrived in the UK following the withdrawal of British troops and the emergency evacuation from Afghanistan, who have been living in temporary hotel accommodation, have been offered a home and three years resettlement support to help establish a new life in County Durham.
- 52 The Team is also working to ensure the council can effectively participate in the government's full dispersal asylum accommodation programme, which all local authorities have been mandated to engage in. This includes co-ordinating responses to property requests, in consultation with partners and services, and assisting the voluntary and community sector to develop a support infrastructure for those arriving in the area under a private housing contract.

Safeguarding

- 53 **Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)** have continued working towards their new structure and model, this included a change in staffing and introduction of a new Partnership Improving Practice Manager.
- 54 The DSCP seeks to challenge partners to continuously improve safeguarding for children and young people in County Durham. Multi-agency, collaborative and practitioner led auditing has been completed throughout 2022-2023. These audits were identified by partners at the Embedded Learning Group following review of wider service intelligence and learning from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. Four audits were completed focusing on:
- (a) Multi agency assessments and recognition of cumulative harm.
 - (b) Recognising and responding to risk factors in sexual abuse.
 - (c) How and when Strategy Meetings are convened, focussing on children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.
 - (d) Whole family assessments, considering cumulative harm, frequent house moves and consideration of all adults significant in the life of the child.
- 55 Recommendation for learning has been developed from each audit, the audit activity has been cross referenced with wider DSCP learning

activity to understand consistent themes and focus improvement activity linked with this. Themes for improvement have included:

- (a) Supervision
- (b) Multiagency engagement
- (c) Cross boundary working
- (d) Use of tools (Harm Matrix)

56 The **Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership (DSAP)** has continued to regularly share and promote headline messages related to the safeguarding adults agenda. It has maintained its updates of the local picture to statutory and relevant partners, and wider stakeholders and continued to seek related assurance. In recent months the DSAP has shared key briefings with all partners which have included a continuation of a suite of 'what good looks like' related to Mental Capacity Act (2005) Assessments, including a guide to inform practitioners about preferred communication and all practicable steps to support adults with care and support needs.

57 There were over 36,000 visits to the DSAP website between April 2022 and March 2023.

58 The DSAP continued to extend its online training offer, it issued over 800 Raising a Concern Workbook certificates to professionals, staff and volunteers by the end of March 2023. Within its dedicated Safeguarding Week, it offered topics such as:

- (a) Modern Slavery Must Knows
- (b) Safeguarding and Family Carers
- (c) What to do about self-neglect – learning from best practice
- (d) Self-Neglect Revisiting Safeguarding Practice
- (e) Understanding Safeguarding for Voluntary and Community Organisations
- (f) Advocacy Matters
- (g) Cyber stalking and Domestic Abuse

59 It is a statutory requirement upon the DSAP to undertake Safeguarding Adults Reviews in certain circumstances, as outlined in Section 44, of the Care Act 2014. The partnership commissioned a complex review into events at an Independent Hospital, Whorlton Hall (Barnard Castle).

The DSAP published the findings in full in May 2023 following conclusion of criminal trial, in which four of nine defendants were found guilty. The DSAP will continue its work to engage with agencies to take forward the findings of the review which focus upon national learning.

Fun and Food programme

60 The **fun and food programme** continues to develop, and over the Easter holidays, 143 projects have been delivered across the County, running 520 sessions, and providing 21,125 meals over the two-week Easter holiday period. The Department for Education has provided funding of £411,885. The range of activities can be seen in the [Easter Fun and Food Video](#).

61 9557 children were engaged in these sessions, and of these, 2009 children had additional needs and 30% of these were eligible for free school meals.

62 During the May half term holiday, the Poverty Action Steering group gave £71,457 to fund 60 AAP projects, delivered across the county, and partners continue to offer wonderful creative projects, engaging children and young people in experiences and opportunities they wouldn't ordinarily be able to access.



Children preparing for a canoeing activity at an Easter Fun and Food session.

63 A Summer Fun and Food programme is also in place. 225 projects are being delivered across the county by a variety of partner agencies including VCS, schools, leisure services, community arts and family hubs. Enriching activities include outdoor/forest activities, dino digs, performing arts, sports/physical activities and much more. Working together with SEND Empowering Inclusive Communities, there is now a Fun and Food offer specifically for children and young people with SEND. This has been developed in direct response to families feeding back that they would like to have activities they can attend that are exclusively for children and young people with SEND, this compliments the inclusive offer that some partners are able to deliver. We continue to develop our offer for 11 – 16-year-olds and now have a dedicated worker in place to support this.

- 64 **Spennymoor AAP** provided Fun and Food funding to Trinity Methodist Church for their Bop and Hop Along Project, which provided children and families with a range of innovative activities which included disco dancing, drama and lunch where children and families were able to choose a variety of healthy options to mix up their own topping for a jacket potato.
- 65 Families were also provided with a take home potato growing pack. This included a special tub with a viewing window so that the children can see the potatoes growing under the soil. Families also received seed potatoes, compost, and fertilizer along with a recipe sheet with low cost, healthy meals using potatoes.
- 66 The Fun and Food event has provided the following outcomes:
- (a) Providing an opportunity for families to come together and meet each other.
 - (b) Encourage parents and children to work together and try something new/different.
 - (c) Encourage children and parents to engage in physical activity.
 - (d) Giving an opportunity for families to be creative.
 - (e) Enabling families to learn and experience growing food.
- 67 Influence church, based in the Cockton Hill area of Bishop Auckland were supported through the **Bishop Auckland and Shildon (BASH) AAP** to deliver a weekly breakfast hub and evening youth group at Bishop Auckland Baptist Church. The funding has supported employment of a part-time community worker and the costs of project activities.
- 68 The Breakfast Hub is a drop in facility, which is open to families with children every Friday morning and offers social activities as well as distribution of weekly breakfast supplies, baby supplies and resources to aid warm living during the winter months.
- 69 The Elevate Youth Group runs on Friday evenings during term time and caters for young people aged 11-18. It is open to people from all genders and backgrounds, without discrimination, and provides a safe place for young people to socialise and learn life skills through a range of activities and learning.
- 70 The Breakfast Hub and Youth Group jointly provide services directly to around 250 people and are supported by a team of up to 15 volunteers.

71 The Church has also received support through the Fun and Food Programme which has enabled them to extend their activity programme, and reach, during several school holiday periods.

Vision 2035: More and better jobs

72 The County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) sets a clear, long-term vision for the area's economy up to 2035, with an overarching aim to create more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy. Since March 2023, a detailed delivery plan for the IES has been in development by the **Economic Partnership**, which includes partners from the private, charity and community sector, giving stakeholders another chance to help shape and deliver the strategy.

73 The delivery plan is being developed under the five key priority areas included in the IES of:

- (a) **People** - supporting people into education, training and jobs and enabling them to excel in their careers and in business.
- (b) **Productivity** - supporting business innovation, growth and higher levels of productivity.
- (c) **Places** - improving places and planning infrastructure so that people and businesses can access opportunities.
- (d) **Promotion** - promoting the county, its assets and opportunities to businesses, investors, visitors, developers and residents.
- (e) **Planet** - investing in people, technologies, research, development and businesses in order to help achieve net zero emissions in County Durham by 2045, activities are captured with each of the above priorities.

74 In order to conclude the work, a workshop is due to be held with the **Economic Partnership** and partners in September to review the Delivery Plan and identify any gaps. The final Delivery Plan will be presented to a future Economic Partnership meeting.

75 The current UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) plan, which was reported in the previous update, has now commenced with its delivery. The plan sets out how funding will be invested into the county over the next three years, following the themes of communities and place, supporting local businesses, and people and skills.

76 Previous restrictions that meant the People and Skills strand could not commence until April 2024 have now been removed, and plans can commence. Our focus for the people and skills area is to support people into employment by increasing life and work skills within communities. The money will be used to provide a broad employment and skills support offer, with activities focusing on addressing sector pressure and skills shortages.

- 77 Any future rounds for the UKSPF will be routed through the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority.
- 78 The Business Energy Efficiency Project (BEEP2) has now been completed with over 500 small and medium sized enterprises and has assisted with energy advice and support since 2019.
- 79 The Cornforth Partnership were funded by **East Durham Rural Corridor AAP** for the Job Shop project. The team developed a new project that offered a programme of personal mentoring, bespoke training and informal learning available to all, including those with additional needs, residents with mental health issues, learning disabilities, long term unemployment, lone parent, ex-offenders, over 50's and those who suffer from low confidence or long-term health issues. The project included:
- (a) "Pop up" Job shops in local community venues across the area where demand was required. These included Coxhoe Village Hall, Fishburn Youth and Community Centre, and Trimdon Village Hall.
 - (b) Identifying appropriately qualified mentors with Information Advice and Guidance, Mentoring and Mental Health First Aid, Qualifications to deliver a comprehensive programme of one-to-one mentoring support in the community.
 - (c) Providing residents with a named member of staff to offer information and guidance over the phone during periods when face to face work was not available.
- 80 All clients were supported to complete a work Outcome Star (a holistic tool that covers seven outcome areas linked to employability and employment) which tracked and monitored progress and the client journey and helped participants to form their SMART Action plan.
- 81 Outcomes included:
- (a) 13 people were supported into employment and 2 jobs were safeguarded.
 - (b) 120 advice and guidance sessions took place.
 - (c) 36 people undertook formal training.
 - (d) 4 community building facilities and 2 voluntary and community groups were supported.
 - (e) 13 people were involved in initiatives aimed at improving mental health and wellbeing.

82 **Stanley AAP** is supporting DurhamWorks to deliver a Stanley Specialist Training and Equipment Budget (Flex Fund) project. This budget will be used to supply all the unemployed young people of Stanley with everything they need to start work, college, or training in their chosen field. The budget can be used for specialist equipment and courses that are not available other than through private procurement methods, it will also have a Discretionary Fund element to be used to remove barriers for clients to access training.



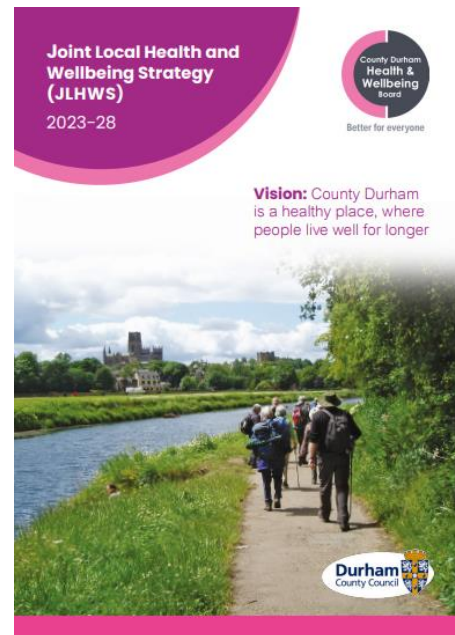
83 To address the significant changes in the funding climate for our young people needing support with employment, Cabinet agreed to increase Core funding by £1 Million at the July 2023 Cabinet meeting. This funding will be provided to ensure consistency of provision for 2024/25 with our well-established employment support teams.

84 Tourism supports our rural communities and offers security of employment. In Weardale, there is a need to ensure that cultural and tourist attractions in the locality are supported and enabled to grow and thus increase the visitor offer, to attract a greater and more diverse footfall. **Weardale AAP** has funded a set of interactive films to engage visitors, which narrate the story of the locality. Investing in Killhope will secure the current jobs but also lead to additional seasonal seasonal workers.

85 Residents of Cotherstone, have been working for over three years to raise funds and negotiate taking over the Methodist Chapel. **Teesdale AAP**, provided funding to support the project alongside other funding streams and the residents Group have also raised £115,000 from a Community Share issue and a series of pop-up cafes. This has enabled the group to purchase the chapel outright and they will now embark on a program of renovations and improvements to create the shop, café and heritage centre.

Vision 2035: People live long and independent lives

86 The **Health and Wellbeing Board** agreed the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-28 at their meeting in May 2023. The plan is underpinned by evidence in the Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment and focussed on health and wellbeing, which is influenced by a range of factors and the wider determinants of health.



87 Health and Social Care services which prevent and treat illness and maintain health and wellbeing, as well as services which support with day-to-day life for people who live with illness and disability, and as people age, are really important, but account for as little as 15% of the health and wellbeing of a population.

88 Behavioural risk factors, such as what we eat and drink, how often we are physically active, whether we smoke or drink alcohol (and if so, how much) and our mental health, all have a huge effect on our state of health and wellbeing. Decisions about food, exercise, smoking, and alcohol use, and our mental health are often influenced by other factors including family and social networks, education, poverty, and culture. These healthy behaviours or risk factors account for 40% of our health and wellbeing.

89 How much money we have, the quality of the house we live in, being safe and secure, as well as the natural environment surrounding us and our access to transport, education and work have the greatest impact on our health and wellbeing. These are the 'building blocks of good health' which impact on our chances of living a long and healthy life and account for approximately 45% of our health and wellbeing.

90 The strategy talks about the impact of behavioural risk factors and wider determinants of health (the building blocks of good health) as well as the impact of access to and quality of health and social care. It is based on evidence from the Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment, to determine the four things upon which a focussed effort would have the biggest impact on Durham's health outcomes. These are:

- (a) To make smoking history.
- (b) Enable a healthy weight for all.

- (c) Improve mental health, wellbeing and resilience.
 - (d) Reduce alcohol harms.
- 91 Our Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy is underpinned by the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing which helps us focus on the key role that people, families and communities play in supporting health and wellbeing.
- 92 It is a high-level strategy, which is simple and easy to understand – helping partners, communities and individuals to get on board with tackling these priority areas.
- 93 Smoking continues to be a key priority for the **Health and Wellbeing Board**. The Government asked for feedback from the public to identify how to reduce the number of under 18s accessing and using vape (e-cigarette) products, while still making sure that adults could access these products to help them stop smoking.
- 94 We used this opportunity to develop a County Durham response on behalf of our **Health and Wellbeing Board**. The County Durham survey was hosted on the Durham County Council website, and feedback was collated, which incorporated views gathered from a range of elected members, agencies, and local residents as part of the consultation.
- 95 It was emphasised that this call for evidence needs to be viewed within the wider context of tobacco. Durham County Council continues to work alongside Fresh and the Association of Directors of Public Health North East who are taking a strategic approach to addressing vaping as part of its regional tobacco control programme – funded by local authorities and the Integrated Care Board – and has developed a series of resources including an evidence based slide set on vaping, a position statement on nicotine vaping, a communications guide, a factsheet for professionals working with young people and a guide for local tobacco control alliances on holding themed discussions on vaping.
- 96 It was noted that a clear theme through our local consultation was that parents and teachers are growing increasingly concerned about the long-term use of vapes especially from a young age. While there is an overall view that for smokers, vaping poses less risk than smoking, there are still worries over the long-term impact of vaping.

97 The **Health and Wellbeing Board** agreed the Moving Together in County Durham Strategy, our Physical Activity Strategy, which is a call to action for those who can influence others to commit to the goal of getting County Durham more active. The following priority areas are identified in the Strategy:

- (a) Children and Young people
Local communities, stakeholders and experts in children and young people's physical activity and will work together to ensure an equitable physical activity offer across the County, identifying and learning from areas of good practice, whilst addressing gaps in provision.

- (b) Inclusive Communities
Empowering local communities to move more in their daily lives and the provision of equitable opportunities to engage in physical activity are key objectives within this strategy. Local insights show that the least active of our population are 'harder to reach'; therefore, engaging communities, valuing our assets, listening, and adapting is a critical part of the Moving Together mission. This group will comprise the gatekeepers to our communities including Action Area Partnerships, Community Action Teams, Social Prescriber Link workers, Refugee settlement officers/coordinators, participation and engagement staff (DCC and CDS), Police and fire service, community pilot and project leads, Durham Community Action, CREE, Local councillors, and any others who are connectors to the community.

- (c) Active Environments
Active Travel, planning, road safety/safer streets, and climate change areas of work are closely aligned. There was evidence that a group to combine these agendas would be useful in communicating and driving forward the health, wellbeing, and climate change focus of these partnerships. A working group comprising partners from Planning, Climate and Regeneration, Woodlands, Active Valleys, and Active Travel will work together to address identified actions and recommendations.



(d) Health and Social care Settings

A wide range of champions from NHS, Wellbeing for Life and Social Care have engaged in the Moving Together process so far. The aim is to establish a group of key influencers who will drive forward actions to make physical activity a standard part of health and social care across County Durham. Training needs have been identified, and a healthy weight conversation group led by Public Health is coproducing brief intervention tools to support health practitioners to increase confidence and improve support for patients in achieving a healthy weight. Further collaboration with secondary care providers and the Prison Service will also take place.

- 98 **The Environment and Climate Change Partnership (ECCP)** and partners have engaged in the consultation to inform the development of the Moving Together in County Durham Strategy and associated action plan. Focal points for input have centred on improving population health by engaging more with our natural environment and the use of natural assets to promote increased physical activity and mental health for both residents and those visiting the county. Recommendations from the ECCP, which included promoting programmes to include cycling and clear links to the food agenda have been incorporated into the action plan.
- 99 **Derwent Valley AAP** is supporting the delivery of a 'Health and Happiness Hubs' project which is a 36-week health and inclusion programme.
- 100 The project is being facilitated by SportWorks and encourages older people to participate in a range of physical activities including seated exercise, stretch and flex, dance, bowls and fun/interactive games. Refreshments are provided after the activities so participants can interact and make new friends. All activities are designed around improving socialisation (making friends), functional fitness (falls prevention), mental health (feeling good) and cognitive stimulation (supporting healthy brain function).
- 101 **Great Aycliffe and Middridge (GAMP) AAP** has funded the Glow Cares projects delivered by the Glow Church UK to provide a warm and welcoming meeting place for people to come together, interact, make friends and enjoy a free vintage 'afternoon tea' in an effort to tackle social isolation and loneliness.
- 102 In recent months due to its popularity the sessions have moved from monthly to weekly, and the group is seeing increased numbers attending as the weather has improved. As the sessions have been so warm and welcoming a group of women have now dedicated

themselves as ‘unofficial’ volunteers, making sure everyone is seen, noticed and supported during sessions and activities.

103 Feedback from the session remains positively high: **“This is the only time of the week I leave the house in a social capacity, and I thoroughly enjoy my time here.”**

104 **3 Towns Partnership AAP** newly formed Youth Panel, gathered for the first time to assess applications for its Children and Young People’s Small Grants fund in January 2023 and has met monthly since then.

105 Jointly managed by the AAP and the Youth Panel, the fund awards grants between £200 and £500 to organisations for projects for children and young people up to age 19.



Members of the 3 Towns' Youth Panel

106 The ideas and applications must come from children and young people, with the support from an adult within the applying organisation, and the final decision on which projects receive funding is made by the members of the Youth Panel.

107 The panel has awarded 6 grants totalling £3000 which should benefit 374 Children and Young People.

- (a) £500 to Jack Drum Arts to hold workshops at its Building Our Planet Festival (BOP Fest), a free festival for families sharing positive messages about what people can do to help prevent the impact of climate change.
- (b) £500 to Natural High, a group which promotes music, dance and drama opportunities for young people, to purchase costumes for its upcoming production, Cinderella Rockerfella.
- (c) £500 to Peases West Primary School to pay for the coach costs for a theatre visit to Lion King at Sunderland Empire.
- (d) £500 to Sunnybrow Primary School – to pay for the coach costs to transport children to the Dukeswood House for a residential.

- (e) £500 to Howden-Le-Wear Primary School towards the construction of the Hobbit Hut a shelter from the elements for Forest School activities.
 - (f) £500 to Stoke The Flame for Graffiti artists sessions at Tow Law Youth Club.
- 108 Jay Conlon was a member of the Youth Panel as a teenager and is now supporting the panel in assessing applications as a **3 Towns Partnership AAP** public representative board member.
- 109 He said: “**As a young person, it was a great opportunity to be part of the panel responsible for the initial Children and Young People's Small Grants, and it's a great privilege to be supporting the delivery of the scheme, with a new generation of young people and projects.**”
- 110 The Armed Forces Day flag was raised at County Hall on 19 June, where Cllr Joan Nicholson, chair of the council, hosted a reception for Deputy Lieutenant of Durham Major (Retired) Chris Lawton MBE, senior representatives of the armed forces community, and council employees who are reservists or cadet force adult volunteers.
- 111 Since signing the Armed Forces Covenant, DCC have been recognised as gold award holders in the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme due to the range of proactive measures taken as a supportive employer and service provider. DCC has a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans who meet essential criteria for an advertised post, and have this year increased the eligibility for roles to five years since leaving the armed forces. Last year, we employed 17 veterans into our workforce.
- 112 DCC contribute to the funding of two full time armed forces outreach workers who offer a first point of contact for veterans or those leaving the armed forces and their families. Their role includes providing support with housing, benefits and debt advice, employment and training, or health and social welfare.
- 113 Also in attendance was our newly designated Armed Forces Champion, Cllr Robert Potts who will represent the County Council at regional Armed Forces partnership meetings.
- 114 **The Better Together VCS Forum** which brings together senior leaders from the larger and/or specialist VCS organisations across County Durham continues to meet to share good practice and look for opportunities to collaborate. The ninth bi-annual Better Together Policy Forum took place at Durham Town Hall in April, with the theme of Healthy Communities: Finding common ground within the Integrated

Care System. Key messages included a willingness to work collectively and collaboratively, flexible longer-term funding at a local level and building an evidence base both of need for local communities and for the impact VCS services can make in our communities. A report on the event can be found [here](#).

Vision 2035: Connected communities

115 Anti-social behaviour is a key priority for the **Safe Durham Partnership** and the final Strategy was agreed at the **Safe Durham Partnership** in January 2023.

116 The **Government's Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan** was launched on 27 March to tackle anti-social behaviour. The Durham Force Area are one of the 16 Trailblazer sites who will receive government funding over 2 years. County Durham and Darlington will receive £2 million this year, with the same expected next year.



117 Funding has been targeted by the government to focus on the following areas:

(a) Probation Service 18+

(b) Youth Justice from 12 years old – some reparation but mostly educational, diversionary

(c) Mediation, for example, neighbourhood disputes

118 The lead partner in this work is the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and partners will be working together to focus in on hotspot areas to try and really make a difference. The OPCC will be required to monitor performance monthly and report back to government.

119 A delivery plan which supports the County Durham Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy will incorporate actions from the areas contained in the Government action plan where it has been identified locally as a priority. Further work is taking place to develop the delivery plan for the County Durham ASB Strategy in relation to actions which have been identified and are not supported by this Government funding.

- 120 **East Durham AAP** has funded a Young Mechanics Project which works with young offenders who could be involved in nuisance biking. The police are running a mechanics course aimed at those offending or at risk of offending with regard to nuisance riding, either by a quad or motorbike. The aim is to educate as to the law and the risks involved in these behaviours, as well as to provide skills in terms of repairing bikes that can be used for volunteering and employment.
- 121 **Chester-le-Street and District AAP** have supported the Market Activity Week since 2010. This project is organised by Durham Constabulary, heavily funded via the AAP and local Councillors, and latterly external funders. There is also an opportunity for local organisations to take part in the week, with a marketplace approach for any who wish to participate to showcase their services.
- 122 The aim of the project is to provide opportunities for families to engage in positive and fun activities through the school holidays, which are Free.
- 123 The event is designed to build relationships between children/young people and local agencies including Durham Constabulary, Durham County Council, Fire & Rescue Service, youth projects, community organisations and volunteer groups to convey messages around crime and community safety to the wider public.
- 124 This event has grown considerably over the years, with thousands of local families attending. This has been especially significant in the last two years, as food has also been provided by working in partnership with local supermarkets, linking in with the holiday activities with healthy food agenda.
- 125 **CONTEST**: The UK's Strategy for Countering Terrorism 2023 was published on 18 July. The aim of **CONTEST** is to reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK, its citizens and interests overseas, so people can live freely and with confidence.
- 126 The **CONTEST** remains a flexible and adaptable framework, and continues to be around the 4 P's:
- (a) **Prevent**: stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
 - (b) **Pursue**: stop terrorist attacks happening in this country or against UK interests overseas.
 - (c) **Protect**: strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack.

(d) **Prepare:** minimise the impact of an attack and reduce the likelihood of further attack.

- 127 As reported previously, Durham County Council along with other local authorities across the North East and Yorkshire were identified as a pilot area by the Home Office and Counter Terrorism Policing for Publicly Accessible Locations/Zones management in relation to protecting people and places from a terrorist attack. The **Public Accessible Locations (PALs) Trial** had now concluded, and the evaluation has now been completed by Coventry University and conclusions shared with the participating North East Local Authorities.
- 128 This evaluation finds that the North-East Zones Pilot has achieved the aim of increasing the capability of local authorities to address the Protect and Prepare elements of the National Counter Terrorism Strategy. Local authorities which actively engaged in the pilot have seen improvements in their capacity and confidence to work with and address Protect and Prepare which have, in turn, led to increases in their capabilities to do so.
- 129 The North-East Zones Pilot has performed well and the model that it uses is sound and suitable for a wider rollout if desired. It is also likely that more impact and joint outcomes will be seen in the North East over the coming months and years.
- 130 However, there are still some areas that require further clarification, particularly in relation to the role of local authorities by way of support of roll out and enforcement and additional resources required for this scale of work.
- 131 Alongside this work, the draft Martyn's Law has now been published and working its way through the parliamentary process under the title of Terrorism (protection of Premises) Bill. Work is underway in partnership with our dedicated Counter Terrorism Security Advisor to ensure those businesses and organisations affected by this imminent legislation are prepared for its implementation and the impact it will have on them.
- 132 To aid in the process, the Protect and Prepare group initially set up as part of the PALS pilot will continue to meet and provide strategic direction to support any responsibilities under Martyn's Law.
- 133 Durham County Council declared an ecological emergency in April 2022, and in response an Ecological Emergency Action Plan (EEAP) is now in place. A wider ecological strategy, a statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), for the county will be produced by the Ecological Emergency workstream of the **Environment and Climate Change Partnership**.

134 The Ecological Emergency Workstream has been waiting on guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) before undertaking any significant work on the LNRS. The DEFRA guidance was released in March 2023 and both Natural England and DEFRA have been holding meetings with partners about producing the LNRS and outlining the requirements that are set out in the Government guidance.

135 Durham County Council, as the designated Responsible Authority for producing the LNRS, have been working with Natural England to identify the best locations for habitat creation and restoration to enhance existing habitat networks and increase connectivity across landscapes. DCC proposed using magnesium limestone grassland as the trial habitat and Natural England are now liaising with the Environmental Records Information Centre for data on magnesium limestone grassland distribution and Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves with a magnesium limestone interest. This trial will feed into the mapping process for the LNRS.

136 **Mid Durham AAP** has funded a wildlife and community officer to work on a 2-year programme to engage the local communities in 3 areas surrounding the churches of St Michaels in Esh Laude which includes Esh Village, Quebec and Langley Park, St Josephs in Ushaw Moor, Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Esh Winning which includes Cornsay Colliery and Waterhouses. Each church has natural wildlife-rich grounds with areas of grassland, mature trees and open space. Each one has the potential to become richer in wildlife with involvement from a wide cross section of the community, to create valuable green havens for everyone to enjoy.

137 Activity and plans at the sites include:

- (a) Bat boxes and bird boxes ready to install.
- (b) A peace garden at St Michaels Church for the local community to reflect on those who have passed.



Families helping out at their local church

- (c) Clearing up rubbish from the wasteland, which will be transformed into a wildlife meadow.
 - (d) Discovering a priest burn water beck, which will be transformed with a kingfisher project, which will include shrub clearance.
- 138 There have been a series of events and open sessions resulting in both increased numbers of volunteers but also increased awareness of the project and highlighting the difference it is making to people and wildlife.
- 139 **4 Together AAP** funded Ferryhill Town Council to install specialist renewable technology at the Football Facility at Dean Bank Recreation Ground. The funding from the partnership will enable the Town Council to install 124 Solar Photovoltaic modules at the facility, and the ability to store any unused energy generated by the solar panels. This enables the Town Council and Ferryhill Town Youth football club, to reduce their carbon footprint, thus having a wider impact on the local community.
- 140 This has been identified as a priority for the Town Council and is expected to result in a net greenhouse gas reduction of 15.96tCO₂e, making the building more energy efficient and as such helping to alleviate the Climate Change Emergency that has been declared across County Durham. Having the ability to store the energy will also provide an economic boost for the facility, supporting the long-term sustainability of a facility that supports the physical and mental wellbeing of the many local residents and the cost of energy for its users.

141 The Lowes Barn Community Project was established several years ago in the Neville's Cross area of Durham. The group have been working toward opening a new community



Celebrating opening Merryoaks Community Hall

centre for the area with the majority of the funding for the project from Section 106 funding, however, **Durham AAP** have supported with additional funding. The trustees of the community group have put in thousands of hours over the last few years and on 11th June, the Merryoaks Community Hall was officially opened. The hall is offering a wide range of activities for the local community and is available for bookings.

- 142 Our series of Breakfast Seminars which bring together elected members, officers, partners, and individuals from **faith and community groups** in roundtable conversations hosted its Breakfast Seminars in May and July. The focus of the May workshop was ‘tainted money’ which could be derived from a number of sources such as gambling from the National Lottery and asked attendees to consider “does it matter where money comes from as long as we are using it well”? The workshop in July looked at the subject of Food justice, not food charity... a sustainable future.

Conclusion

- 143 There has been a range of legislation that has recently been through parliament, as well as those areas that are planned. This will provide some clarity of any responsibilities that may be incumbent on us as we continue to work together with our stakeholders and partners to support our communities. However, we will continue to work together to ensure we have good outcomes for our communities.
- 144 The conclusion of our review of community engagement and our new model for the delivery of Local Networks, will strengthen the value of good partnership working and community engagement and provide opportunities to attract new participation by carrying out focussed engagement/neighbourhood planning activities. New governance will clearly define the purpose, structure and functions of the Local Networks.

Background papers

- None.

Other useful documents

- None.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

Area and neighbourhood budgets are utilised and delivered through the 14 AAPs and ensure the Council (and AAPs) receive improved information on the outputs achieved through use of locality budgets.

Consultation

The County Durham Partnership framework is a key community engagement and consultation function of the Council and its partners. The recommendations in the report are based on extensive consultation with AAP partners.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The actions set out in this report aim to ensure equality and diversity issues are embedded within the thematic partnerships and the working practice of AAPs.

Climate Change

This is recognised throughout partnership activities.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to form a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment and to reduce re-offending. In County Durham, the CSP is the Safe Durham Partnership.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.