Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide Members with information contained within the Council Plan 2012-2016 that is relevant to the work of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This allows the opportunity for Members to refresh the Committee’s work programme to reflect the five objectives and subsequent outcomes identified within the Council Plan for the Council’s ‘Altogether Greener’ priority theme.

Background

2. The current work programmes of the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees focus on the priority areas identified within the context of the Council Plan, Cabinet’s Forward Plan of decisions, Sustainable Community Strategy, Partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in Government legislation.

3. In relation to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members will recall that its work programme was refreshed at the Committee meeting held on 22nd July 2011, to ensure that areas of focus were in line with current and forthcoming priorities within the Committee’s remit. Further areas of focus for the Committee have been added throughout 2011/12 to reflect changing Government policy and at the request of Members.

Council Plan 2012-2016

4. The Council Plan is the overarching high level plan for the County Council, which now covers a four year period in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan. It is updated on an annual basis. The plan sets out how the Council will consider the corporate priorities for change and the key actions the Authority will take in support of delivering the longer term goals in the Sustainable Community Strategy (2010-2030) and the Council’s own change agenda. Attached as Appendix 2 is the ‘Altogether Greener’ section of the Council Plan for Members to consider.
5. Within the Council’s Altogether Greener priority theme, the focus is ensuring an attractive and liveable local environment and contributing to tackling global environmental challenges.

6. To help address these issues the Council has identified 5 objectives, together with outcomes to achieve the overarching objectives. They are set out below. The outcomes are the same as those included in the 2011 – 14 Council Plan, with the exception of G6 and G8

   - Mitigate the impact of and adapt to climate change
     - Reduce C02 emissions in County Durham (G1)
     - Adaptation to the consequences of climate change (G2)

   - Promote pride in our communities
     - Cleaner, greener, more attractive and sustainable environment (G3)

   - Enhance conserve and maximise the value of Durham’s natural environment
     - Resilient and healthy ecosystems across rural and urban landscapes. (G4)
     - Empowered communities who engage with the conservation and enhancement of their local environment. (G5)

   - Enhance, conserve and promote Durham’s built environment
     - Reduced number of vacant and derelict buildings. (G6)
     - Enhanced and accessible historic environment and heritage. (G7)

   - Reduce waste
     - Deliver sustainable waste management solutions. (G8)
     - Increase re-use, re-cycling and composting. (G9)

7. Over the next four years, the Council will strive to ensure an attractive and liveable local environment and will contribute to tackling global challenges, by focusing on the actions required to achieve the above objectives.

8. The Council Plan contains a series of High Level Action Plans, detailing the work which needs to be undertaken by the Authority in order to deliver the outcomes identified above, see Appendix 2.

**Current Work Programme**

9. During 2011/2012, the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has undertaken budgetary and performance monitoring, an in depth Scrutiny Review, systematic six monthly reviews of progress against recommendations and has received overview presentations.
* Denotes in line with Council Plan 2012 - 2016.

In depth Scrutiny Reviews

* • Review of Development of Renewable Energy Technologies in County Durham Scrutiny Review (Objective – Mitigate the impact of and adapt to climate change)

Systematic Review

* • Harmonisation of fees and charges – collection of bulky waste (Objective – Deliver sustainable waste management solutions)

* • Review of Winter Maintenance Strategy and Service (Objective – Mitigate the impact of and adapt to climate change)

Areas of Overview Activity

* • Carbon Management Plan (Objective - Mitigate the impact of and adapt to climate change)

* • Flooding – Responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act. (Objective - Mitigate the impact of and adapt to climate change)

* • Waste Programme - Updates (Objective – Reduce waste)

* • Regional Growth Opportunities in Renewable Energy Technologies (Objective – Mitigate the impact of, and adapt to climate change)

* • Development of Renewable Energy in County Durham (Objective – Mitigate the impact of, and adapt to climate change)

* • Draft Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (Objective – Mitigate the impact of, and adapt to climate change)

* • Town and Country Planning Act - Section 215 – Action that can be taken in respect of blight (Objective- enhance, conserve and promote Durham’s built environment)

* • Limestone Landscapes (Objective – Enhance, conserve and maximise the value of Durham’s natural environment)

* • County Durham Green Infrastructure (Objective – Enhance, conserve and maximise the value of Durham’s natural environment)

* • Sustainable Commissioning and Procurement (Objective – Mitigate the impact of, and adapt to climate change)

* • New recycling and rubbish collections – communicating change (Objective – Reduce waste)
* • Durham Heritage Coast Partnership (*Objective – Enhance, conserve and maximise the value of Durham’s natural environment*)

* • Management Options Appraisal Phase 1: Setting up of a Charitable Trust to Manage the Council’s Sport, Leisure, Cultural and Library Services

* • Whitburn Minewater Discharge (*Objective – Enhance, conserve and maximise the value of Durham’s natural environment*)

* • Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership (*Objective – Enhance, conserve and maximise the value of Durham’s natural environment*)

* • Fly tipping (*Objective - Promote pride in our communities*)

**Budgetary and performance monitoring**

* • Quarterly budgetary and performance monitoring.

10. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has also considered the following cross cutting items:

  * • Fuel Poverty (*Objective – Mitigate the impact of, and adapt to climate change*)

  * • County Durham Plan – Development of Core Strategy (*Objectives – Enhance, conserve and maximise the value of Durham’s natural environment and enhance, conserve and promote Durham’s built environment*)

  * • Metal Theft (*Objective – Enhance, conserve and promote Durham’s built environment*)

11. In addition, the current work programme for the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee identifies the following for future consideration:

  * • Development of an Open Space Strategy (*Objectives – Promote pride in our communities and Enhance, conserve and maximise the value of Durham’s natural environment*)

**Gaps within current Work Programme**

12. Having considered the ‘Altogether Greener’ section of the Council Plan for 2012 – 2016, the following outcome is not covered within the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme 2011 – 13, which was agreed on 10th June 2011:

  • Reduced number of vacant and derelict buildings (G6)
Cross Cutting Themes

13. Identified below are cross cutting issues which cut across the Altogether Greener, Altogether Wealthier and Altogether Safer themes of the Council Plan for 2012 - 2016:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Altogether</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Link to Altogether Greener outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wealthier</td>
<td>Vibrant and successful towns</td>
<td>W3 - Increase vitality of main settlements through a whole town approach</td>
<td>G6 – Reduced number of vacant and derelict buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G7 – Enhanced and accessible historic environment and heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safer</td>
<td>Reduce anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>S2 - Reduce incidence of anti social behaviour and low level crime</td>
<td>G3 - Cleaner, greener, more attractive and sustainable environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protect vulnerable people from harm</td>
<td>S5 - Build community and organisational resilience for emergency preparedness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G2 – Adaptation to the consequences of climate change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next Steps

14. The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the appropriate section from the Council Plan, Appendix 2 (copy attached) to inform the Committee’s work programme for 2012 - 2014, reflecting on the current work programme detailed in paragraphs 9, 10 and 11 above.

15. Members will receive a further report at the next Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee confirming/agreeing the Committee’s work programme for 2012 - 2014 based on today’s discussion.
Recommendations

16. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the information contained in Appendix 2 (copy attached).

17. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee refreshes the work programme for 2012 - 2014 by discussing and considering those actions identified under Altogether Greener priority theme of the Council Plan 2012 - 2016, Appendix 2 (copy attached).

18. That the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9th July 2012, receives a further report detailing the Committee's work programme for 2012 - 2014.

Contact: Feisal Jassat Tel: 0191 3833506
Author: Gillian Garrigan Tel: 0191 3836640
**Appendix 1: Implications** (The following implications are taken directly from the report to County Council on 22nd February 2012 re the Council Plan and Service Plans 2012 – 2016)

**Finance**
The Council Plan sets out the corporate priorities of the Council for the next 4 years. The Medium Term Financial Plan aligns revenue and capital investment to priorities within the Council Plan.

**Staffing**
The Council’s strategies are aligned to achievement of the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

**Risk**
Consideration of risk is a key element in the corporate and service planning framework with both the Council Plan and Service Plans containing sections on risk.

**Equality and diversity**
Individual equality impact assessments have been prepared for each savings proposal within the Council Plan. The cumulative impact of all savings proposals in total has also been presented to Council and will be updated as savings proposals are further developed. In addition a full impact assessment has been undertaken for the draft Council Plan. The actions in the Council Plan include specific issues relating to equality and aim to improve the equality of life for those with protected characteristics. The Plan has been influenced by consultation and monitoring to include equality issues. There is no evidence of negative impact for particular groups.

**Accommodation**
The Council’s Corporate Asset Management Plan is aligned to the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

**Crime and disorder**
The Altogether Safer section of the Council Plan sets out the Council’s contributions to tackling crime and disorder.

**Human rights**
None

**Consultation**
Council and partnership priorities have been developed following an analysis of available consultation data including an extensive consultation programme carried out as part of the development of the interim Sustainable Community Strategy and this has been reaffirmed by subsequent consultation on the budget and through the Residents’ Survey. Results have been taken into account in developing the Council’s resourcing decisions.

**Procurement**
None

**Disability**
None

**Legal Implications**
None
Appendix 2

Altogether Greener

There is mounting evidence that the UK is beginning to experience changing climatic conditions and more extreme weather patterns attributable to the effects of global climate change. These changes are accelerating and will bring significant challenges to every aspect of our lives, our communities and the natural environment. The council has set challenging targets to reduce carbon emissions caused by the council’s operations and also to tackle emissions across the wider county. We aim to do this through programmed activity with residents and also through working with large scale businesses and employers such as the NHS and Fire and Rescue Service. The council also has a key role in ensuring that resilience to extreme weather events is increased through adapting to the changes caused by climate change.

Reducing waste is another important contributor to sustaining our natural resources. Last year we land-filled 143,946 tonnes of municipal household waste representing a reduction of 14% on the previous year. We need to further reduce waste generated, increase levels of re-use and recycling, and where possible recover energy from waste if we are to achieve our goal of diverting waste from landfill.
Through engaging with our communities, we know that local environmental cleanliness is an important factor in making County Durham a good place to live, work and bring up a family. Both the natural and built environment require careful management to ensure that we can maintain a good quality of place and access to our natural assets. In addition, communities regularly emphasise the importance of access to parks and green spaces for socialising, exercise and enjoying nature. Through education, involvement and enforcement, where necessary, we will work with communities to improve the overall cleanliness and attractiveness of our local environment.

1. Mitigate the impact of, and adapt to climate change

The council has targets to reduce its own carbon emissions by 40% by 2015 and emissions across the whole of County Durham by 40% by 2020. Alongside other key partners, the council is working to ensure the county is well prepared to adapt to the consequences of climate change. In particular we need to ensure that County Durham is well prepared to cope with any future major flooding events. By working with the Environment Agency, we have identified those areas which may be vulnerable to flooding. Over the next three years we will be implementing actions to mitigate the potential impact and protect our communities.

Going well

- We have invested in new street lighting to save energy and reduce carbon emissions, improved the energy efficiency of 3000 Durham homes as a result of £5.5million investment through Carbon Efficiency Reduction Target (CERT) and reduced carbon emissions from fleet vehicles by 11%.
- We have now completed a total of 478 Solar installations including:
  - Photovoltaic panels on 40 Council buildings saving 1000 tonnes of carbon and generating an income of £600,000 a year;
  - Photovoltaic panels on social housing to maximise benefit from the Government’s ‘Feed in Tariff’ which subsidised the installation costs.
- School carbon reduction officers have overseen implementation of carbon saving measures that have saved 1,200 tonnes and £150,000 a year
- The Surface Water Management Plan, highlighting areas where flood risk needs to be managed through protection or alleviation measures, has been approved and is now an active plan with flood risk areas being monitored and schemes programmed as and when required.

Cause for concern

The North East Adaptation Study (2008) http://www.adaptne.org/ highlights the following trends in the County Durham climate over the next few decades to 2050:
- There will be an increased frequency of summer heatwaves and this will create significant implications for public health.
- Increased temperatures are also likely to increase the risk of disease for both humans and livestock.
- With the projected increases in extreme rainfall events, flood events may become more frequent.
- Government have made major reductions to subsidies that previously
encouraged fitting of photovoltaic panels (the Feed-in Tariff), which will impact on the number of installations, and this may destabilise the wider renewals industry.

- Progress against the Countywide CO₂ target has been slow but considerable progress has been made in reducing emissions from County Council activity during 2010/11.

**Did you know**

- We maintain more than 80,000 street lights and by 31 March 2012 approximately 15% of the lighting stock will be controlled by CMS (Central Management System) equipment allowing remote monitoring, switching and dimming to reduce energy and CO₂ emissions.
- We achieved an “Outstanding” BREEAM rating on the new Brandon and Esh Winning Primary Schools: the most sustainable buildings in the property portfolio, a ‘first’ nationally.
- Carbon emissions from Council homes across County Durham have been reduced by 26,320 tonnes, saving households a total of £1.5 million from their energy bills.
- We now have 12 buildings heated by wood pellets which are a carbon neutral fuel source.
- In partnership with others, we won the National Home Improvement Council Award for the best use of photo-voltaics (solar panels) in a retro-fit scheme at Craghead in 2011.

**Look out for:**

- The new Low Carbon Master Plan which will inform our future Climate Change Strategy.
- An EU supported project called IMCORE which is studying the Durham Coastline and looking at changes to marine ecology.

**High level Action Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantify the carbon impacts of the council’s waste services; including those associated with new waste treatment and look to set future targets and actions for reducing them.</td>
<td>Head of Projects &amp; Business Services/Carbon Management Unit</td>
<td>August 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deliver sustainable design schemes for the new primary school buildings at Kirk Merrington and Greenland (South Moor) in order to improve environmental performance through:

- Biomass boilers to reduce CO2;
- A Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS);
- Maximising the use of natural daylight and ventilation;
- Grey water recycling capability;
- Surfaces painted with a low level of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) &
- Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) A-rated flooring

Achieving an overall BREEAM standard of ‘excellence’

Review possibilities for moving to alternative powered vehicles and provide recommendations for consideration

Review existing network of Customer Access Points as part of the overall authority Accommodation Strategy and the Customer Contact Strategy in order to reduce the need to travel

Mitigate the effect of flooding throughout the county by establishing a Flood Risk Management Strategy:

- Addressing and supporting climate change adaptation through land allocations and the design and enhancement of environments (County Durham Plan).
- Managing the coastal environment in accordance with the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)

Install 120 electric vehicle charging points

Implement the County Durham Low Carbon Masterplan

- Plan published
Develop and implement a climate change adaptation strategy

- Communications and community engagement plan

Head of Planning and Assets

Plan agreed December 2012

2. Promote pride in our communities

Consultation with our residents consistently identifies clean streets as one of the most important priorities. However, addressing this issue is not solely about the council improving its operations. To be truly effective and sustainable our approach should harness the contribution that everyone can make, as we all have a role to play in helping make our communities cleaner, safer and greener. We intend to encourage local people to look at ways to improve their local area and to get involved in implementing their ideas.

Going well 🌟

- Over 7,200 people participated in activities at the 2011 Altogether Greener event in Durham City
- We have established a Junior Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Currently a pilot, it aims to encourage young people to take an interest in their personal safety, their community and crime and disorder issues.
- We are promoting waste awareness messages countywide
- We are supporting the national Love Where You Live campaign and have delivered a number of events and initiatives during the last year to engender pride in our communities including:
  - Leadgate Week in Action
  - Sustrans Week in Action
  - Green Dog Walkers
  - The Word
  - Stanley Heart (loving where you live) community project for Stanley Bus Station
  - Golden Ticket – Riverside Park
  - Fix You – Chester le Street
  - Chester le street Market Activity week
  - Respect Event, Chester le Street
  - Northumbria in Bloom
  - Bulb Planting Challenge

Cause for concern 🚫

- It is anticipated that the reduction in CO₂ emissions from local authority operations will not achieve target.
- Operations is anticipated to The Residents Survey 2010 demonstrates that levels of deprivation are interlinked with feelings of safety.
- In those areas defined as being within the top 10% most deprived, 16% feel unsafe in their local area at night. This reduces significantly to 7% in areas defined as not deprived.
Did you know?
• Neighbourhood Watch has been expanded to include Street Champions, enabling environmental concerns to be reported.
• In total there were 20.29 tonnes of waste, collected from gardens and yards, from the 8 ‘Weeks of Action’ in Derwent Valley.
• 24 sessions have been delivered in local schools, including ‘Open your Eyes’ DVD, Tidy Ted assemblies and Story Sack, educating 2,471 children and young people.

Look out for:
• Roll out of the Junior Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
• The 2012 Environment Awards.
• The ‘Golden Ticket’ campaign in your area.
• Community conservation days in your area.
• Stanley Heart (loving where you live) community project for Stanley Bus Station 2012.

High level Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deliver a £2.3m improvement scheme to Durham Crematorium which includes extending the existing building, installing new cremators which comply with European mercury abatement legislation, improving access and car parking facilities</td>
<td>Head of Technical Services</td>
<td>December 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an Open Space Strategy to incorporate countryside, play events, playing pitches, parks, allotments</td>
<td>PPC Manager / Streetscene Area Manager (S)/Sport and Leisure</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate the ‘Love where you live’ campaign in a wide range of communication mechanisms in conjunction with ‘Pride’ theme</td>
<td>Head of Direct Services</td>
<td>September 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Part 2A by inspecting the top ten highest priority sites of potential concern, in County Durham</td>
<td>Head of Environmental Health and Consumer Protection</td>
<td>March 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Enhance, conserve and maximise the value of Durham’s natural environment

Our natural environment underpins our economic prosperity, as well as our health and wellbeing and as a result, protecting the environment and enhancing biodiversity is a priority to us.

There have been a number of improvements to Durham’s natural environment; the air we breathe is cleaner, the quality of water in our rivers has improved and our
wildlife sites are in better condition. These successes show that properly focused environmental policies can deliver real change. Our natural environment is under constant pressure and if it is to be protected as a resource for future generations, we need to take action now.

There are natural challenges specific to the North East of England that need to be considered, including the need to provide large scale biodiverse landscapes to mitigate the impact of climate change.

**Going well**

15 parks and open spaces have been awarded green flags: an increase on the previous year and the highest of all North East authorities. The Authority also has the highest number of cemeteries with green flags of any burial authority in the country.

The Council is a key delivery partner in various ‘Landscape Scale’ partnerships. These include:

- The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, helping to look after England’s second largest AONB.
- The Limestone Landscapes and the ‘Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Area’.
- The emerging Local Nature Partnership covering the Derwent Valley, Durham Coalfield and the Tees Plain.
- The Heart of Durham partnership, which in particular has enabled recovery of small pearl bordered fritillary butterfly populations

**Cause for concern**

- Changing weather patterns associated with Climate Change are expected to negatively affect habitats in Durham and the species they support
- Despite the excellent progress made by the North Pennines AONB Partnership and others, more investment is needed in our peatlands to ensure that they can keep providing their many benefits for society, including being our best natural store of carbon.

**Did you know?**

- We undertake biodiversity management and enhancement works on the Countryside Estate comprising 1200 hectares and 70 sites
- The Council is responsible for management of more than 700 Ha of Woodland.
- 30% of the North Pennines AONB is in County Durham and, through its support for the North Pennines AONB Partnership; the Council is backing the conservation of some of the country’s most threatened habitats, including extensive peatlands and rare species-rich upland hay meadows.
- The County Council supports a hedgerow partnership to provide grants for the maintenance and promotion of this valuable environmental asset in the County
- The Heritage Coast Partnership comprises those with an interest in the coast between Hendon and Hartlepool, protecting and enhancing this fantastic coastline and promoting its use for quiet recreation. Our work was recognised through a Council of Europe Landscape Awards Special Mention during 2011. ([www.durhamheritagecoast.org](http://www.durhamheritagecoast.org))
Look out for:
- The forthcoming Countryside Strategy, Green Infrastructure Strategy, Open Spaces Strategy and Heritage Coast Management Plan
- Opportunities to get involved in countryside volunteering across County Durham, and particularly in new programmes from the North Pennines AONB Partnership such as community archaeology project ‘Altogether Archaeology’ and community biodiversity recording / conservation project ‘WildWatch’
- The Design and Conservation supplementary planning document which will set out the approach for design and conservation to be delivered through forthcoming County Durham Plan
- The ‘Jubilee Woods’ tree planting project, in celebration of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's historic 2012 Diamond Jubilee - where the County Council, in partnership with the Woodland Trust, CDENT and the Forestry Commission are planting 140 hectares of trees in the County

High level Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support the development of Local Nature Partnerships and subsequent partnership action planning</td>
<td>Head of Planning and Assets</td>
<td>2012-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to the development of emerging Local Area Delivery Groups and their associated action plans for groups including:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Limestone Landscape Partnership</td>
<td>Head of Planning and Assets</td>
<td>2012-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Heart of Durham Landscape Partnership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heart of Teesdale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Derwent Valley and Pennine Fringe Partnership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver a Tree Planting programme which will see 250,000 trees planted across the County by March 2014</td>
<td>Head of Planning and Assets</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Enhance, conserve and promote Durham’s built environment

Our built environment is the place where most people both live and work. The appearance of our built environment is important but good design is about much more than how things look. It is about uplifting communities and transforming how people feel and behave. It is also about using resources effectively and imaginatively.

There is a need to plan for the future of our built environment. As our population ages, we need to make places more welcoming and inclusive, and ensure that they are designed for the convenience and the enjoyment of all age groups. In addition, the challenges of climate change demand that we fundamentally re-think the way we
plan and design our built environment – both to mitigate climate change, by using local and sustainable materials in the actual build, whilst ensuring that energy use from the building is minimised through energy efficiency and renewable energy and to adapt, by ensuring that development is fully prepared for more extreme weather.

**Going well**
- Public realm works in Seaham were completed in 2011.
- A £2m programme of works to improve our industrial estates has been agreed to ensure they are better placed to support existing and new businesses in the future.
- Bishop Auckland town centre improvements are on schedule.
- In 2011, all of Durham City Homes’ properties were made decent under the national decent homes standard, raising the standard of living across the 6,000 homes in the City area.

**Cause for concern**
- The number of new houses being built is much lower than in previous years which is impacting on the amount of investment in the built environment.

**Did you know?**
- The Council produces Conservation Area Character Appraisals for the County to ensure planning decision making promotes the conservation of these areas. These can be found on the Council’s website after they have been agreed by Cabinet.
- The Council asks for contributions from developers of large sites to support the local built environment, in many cases this is spent on local community facilities such as play parks, the road network or on other local infrastructure.
- The Council has recently agreed a policy to restrict the way in which ‘to let’ signs can be displayed in Durham city to try to improve the quality of place in the City.

**Look out for:**
- Government proposals to change the way that developers are charged for new development (called the ‘Community Infrastructure Levy’). This also affects how affordable homes are to be provided on new developments.
- The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) from the Government which revises the current National Planning Policy. As Local Planning Authority we will implement the NPPF across the County.

**High level Action Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support the reduction of Buildings at Risk in County Durham through identifying works, possible grants and providing advice. Identify 12 sites over the next two years and work with owners to try and remove heritage sites from the risk list.</td>
<td>Head of Planning and Assets</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Manage promote and deliver an annual partnership programme of Heritage Open Days and enhance access to a quality environment for tourism provider and customer.

Develop proposals for Binchester roman fort including the submission of an HLF bid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Description</th>
<th>Responsible Person</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manage promote and deliver an annual partnership programme of Heritage Open Days and enhance access to a quality environment for tourism provider and customer.</td>
<td>Head of Planning and Assets</td>
<td>September each year 2012-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop proposals for Binchester roman fort including the submission of an HLF bid</td>
<td>Head of Planning and Assets</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Reduce waste

Over the last few decades, County Durham has provided a significant proportion of the Magnesia Limestone needed for major construction work and agriculture around the country, leading to the creation of numerous opencast quarry sites, which have been used as landfill sites to deposit much of the waste generated by people and organisations within the county. However, this relatively cheap and convenient means of waste disposal is increasingly becoming unavailable as new legislation places stringent environmental challenges on landfill management and the remaining quarries are filling up. Added to this the Landfill Tax Escalator is increasing annually by £8.00/tonne making the costs of landfill disposal prohibitive. The decomposing organic component of our land filled waste also emits landfill gases including methane which is some 23 times more damaging to the atmosphere than carbon dioxide.

There are various options for the treatment of waste but all treatment options have associated environmental impacts. The only real answer to reducing environmental impacts associated with waste treatment is to reduce the overall quantity of waste requiring treatment. European Directives, our National Waste Strategy and the most recent Governmental Waste Policy Review identify the urgent need to address the generation of waste from industrial production by dramatically increasing the use of recycled and recovered raw resources rather than reliance on newly extracted resources. Better use of recycled materials will preserve our scarce resources and provides environmental benefits including reduced air pollution and energy use. Recycling also provides employment opportunities, encourages us all, as either residents, service users or organisations, to take more responsibility for waste. Any improvement activity in this area must therefore be carried out on a Partnership basis, where we are working with people, traders, manufacturers and organisations of Durham to reduce the amounts of waste we generate, recycle as much as possible and explore opportunities for re-use.

Going well

- Recycling rates have improved by 15% since 2009/10.
- The tonnage of Garden Waste collected has increased by 15% since 2009/10.
- The Furniture Re-use Forum has diverted 831 tonnes of furniture from landfill.
- The school battery recycling campaign.
- Countywide waste awareness messages are resulting in improved recycling rates and diversion of waste from landfill.
Cause for concern

- Across the County and the Country households are producing less waste, but this is probably connected to the economic downturn. When the economy recovers this may cause an increase in household waste.
- To avoid additional costs associated with the Landfill Tax Escalator, we need to reduce waste and recycle more waste each year.

Did you know?
Assisted Waste collections are available for residents who may experience genuine difficulties in placing their bin out for collection and do not have anyone to assist them.
We recycle our street sweepings, diverting nearly 4,500 tonnes from landfill and saving more than £350,000 over a 6 month period.
- We empty refuse/recycling containers over 18 million times a year
- We handled 239,189 tonnes of household waste and 268,000 of municipal waste during 2011-12.
- We re-used, recycled and composted 93,909 tonnes (39.3% of household waste) during 2011-12.
- We have distributed over 40,000 home compost bins across the County since 2002.

Look out for:
- Details of waste collections, changes to collections and seasonal promotions which can be found on our web site – www.durham.gov.uk on the ‘waste news and events’ page.
- Waste Campaigns in 2012 including:
  o North East Recycling Rewards - launched 1st December and runs to end of July 2012
  o Real Nappy Week - 16th to 22nd April 2012
  o Compost Awareness Week -7th to 12th May 2012
  o World Environment Day -5th June 2012
  o Recycle Week - 18th to 24th June 2012.
- Changes to the household waste and recycling collection service with the implementation of a county wide alternate weekly collection service
- Changes to the Trade Waste Service
- A rationalised and harmonised Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Service
## High level Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design, communicate and implement harmonised alternative weekly collection across the county</td>
<td>Head of Direct Services</td>
<td>July 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement of a Waste Treatment Solution</td>
<td>Head of Projects &amp; Business Services</td>
<td>January 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a procurement exercise to determine future options for council disposal of residual, recycling and composting waste</td>
<td>Head of Direct Services/Head of Projects &amp; Business Services</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out an options appraisal for separate collections of food waste</td>
<td>Head of Direct Services</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1: Implications

Finance
The Council Plan sets out the corporate priorities of the Council for the next 4 years. The Medium Term Financial Plan aligns revenue and capital investment to priorities within the Council Plan.

Staffing
The Council’s strategies are aligned to achievement of the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

Risk
Consideration of risk is a key element in the corporate and service planning framework with both the Council Plan and Service Plans containing sections on risk.

Equality and diversity
Individual equality impact assessments have been prepared for each savings proposal within the Council Plan. The cumulative impact of all savings proposals in total has also been presented to Council and will be updated as savings proposals are further developed. In addition a full impact assessment has been undertaken for the draft Council Plan. The actions in the Council Plan include specific issues relating to equality and aim to improve the equality of life for those with protected characteristics. The Plan has been influenced by consultation and monitoring to include equality issues. There is no evidence of negative impact for particular groups.

Accommodation
The Council’s Corporate Asset Management Plan is aligned to the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

Crime and disorder
The Altogether Safer section of the Council Plan sets out the Council’s contributions to tackling crime and disorder.

Human rights
None

Consultation
Council and partnership priorities have been developed following an analysis of available consultation data including an extensive consultation programme carried out as part of the development of the interim Sustainable Community Strategy and this has been reaffirmed by subsequent consultation on the budget and through the Residents’ Survey. Results have been taken into account in developing the Council’s resourcing decisions.

Procurement
None

Disability
None

Legal Implications
None