



Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To set out the consultation feedback and proposed changes to the content and priorities in the revised Council Plan.
- 2 To ask Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) to review the content of the draft Council Plan 2025-2029, attached at Appendix 3, to check that it accurately reflects our day-to-day services and our longer-term strategic ambitions.
- 3 To ask that any suggested changes are submitted to councilplan@durham.gov.uk as soon as possible.
- 4 Note that the current draft is a word document for ease of editing, but the final version will be designed in a way consistent with the current plan.

Executive summary

- 5 Although, our council plan spans four years, we review it every year. This is to ensure it remains relevant, within budget and to timescale.
- 6 We started this review with a seven week service engagement and public consultation exercise. A summary of feedback received and our responses is presented in Appendix 2.
- 7 Having considered responses from our services, councillors, staff, partners and the public, we were able to draft a Council Plan for 2025-29. This is attached at Appendix 3.
- 8 To date, the draft plan has been presented to all service management teams, Corporate Management Team and informal Cabinet. It will be presented to Cabinet on 15 January before progressing to Council where it will be considered for final approval on 19 February.

- 9 Once the Local Government Finance Settlement has been confirmed (expected December), we will be able to update the finance sections of our plan. However, this will not be until January.

Recommendation(s)

- 10 COSMB is recommended to:
- (a) Note the feedback from the consultation and our responses in Appendix 2.
 - (b) Consider the content and format of the draft Council Plan 2025-2029 (attached at Appendix 3) and e-mail any suggested amends to councilplan@durham.gov.uk as soon as possible.
 - (c) Note the timetable for approving the Council Plan 2025-2029.

Background

- 11 The council plan is our principal corporate planning document. It explains how we will effectively deliver our day-to-day services, our longer-term ambitions and contribute to achieving the County Durham Vision¹.
- 12 Detail of the actions and projects we will undertake to help achieve our priorities is contained within our supporting strategies and service plans.
- 13 The council plan spans four years. But we review it every year. This is so it remains relevant, within budget and to timescale. When we review the plan, we consider our most recent achievements (and what we learned), the challenges we face, the opportunities available to us, and our operating environment (internally and externally). We also ask our residents whether we are addressing the issues that matter to them.
- 14 The [current version of our council plan](#) was agreed at Council in February 2024, and we started reviewing it in July. In line with best value guidance, which emphasises the importance of taking into account feedback from residents and service users, we started the process with a seven-week public consultation and service engagement exercise (29 July to 15 September).
- 15 We gathered views through an online survey placed on the council website, a dedicated email address, and paper surveys available in our Customer Access Points and libraries.
- 16 We broadened our reach by raising awareness of the plan, our ambitions and the refresh process. We contacted key consultees such as the County Durham Partnership and its networks, all Area Action Partnerships, the voluntary and community sector network, The Durham Youth Council, the Children in Care Council, local businesses, staff networks and County Durham Association of Local Councils. We attended Extended Management Team and tier 4 / 5 briefing sessions to encourage our staff to participate. And we sent briefing notes to all councillors, and posted an update on the members' portal, offering them the opportunity to contribute.
- 17 We have considered all feedback and produced a draft Council Plan for 2025-29. A summary of the feedback, and our responses, is attached at Appendix 2. The draft Council Plan 2025-29 is attached at Appendix 3.
- 18 The plan remains a high level document - designed to give the reader an immediate sense of our strategic direction and what we are intending to do. Our priority themes (our economy, our environment, our people,

¹ Developed with our County Durham Together partners, the Vision describes what we want the county to look like over the next decade and beyond.

our communities and our council), and their supporting objectives remain unchanged:

Our economy	Capturing our contribution to the more and better jobs ambition within the Vision, together with our agenda as set out in our Inclusive Economic Strategy.
Our people	Capturing our contributions to the long and independent lives ambition within the Vision, together with our priorities set out in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
Our communities	Capturing the connected communities ambition within the Vision and supplementing it with specific actions around helping those communities most in need of support.
Our environment	Capturing our priorities and plans around a climate emergency and an economic emergency together with our role in waste management, pollution and custodianship of the natural environment.
Our council	Capturing our organisational priorities around effective resource management, creating a workforce for the future and making best use of data and technology to provide the best services to our customers.

- 19 The document sets out under each ambition, what our priority is, what our achievements have been, what the issues are to address, what the council's contribution is in this area, what our future approach will be, what major projects we will be undertaking and what are the key performance indicators for each objective.
- 20 Our refreshed plan contains 55 priorities, 13 more than last year.
- 21 Following feedback, some priorities were rolled over from last year's plan. Some remained exactly the same with the original wording. Others were reworded to make it clearer what we are trying to achieve and /or reflect progress made to date.
- 22 We also created some new priorities. These included actions which focused on improving the condition of our highways network, reforming buses with better service provision, helping nature recover, enhancing our natural environment, reducing homelessness, targeting environmental crime, improving care options whilst reducing high cost

permanent care solutions, and using technology to make our services both effective and efficient.

- 23 We deleted some priorities as they are covered by existing priorities, are complete or have been replaced by new priorities. We recognised some priorities had similar outcomes – these have been combined.
- 24 We will continue to measure progress in achieving our ambitions, objectives and priorities through our performance framework - and report and share publicly through the quarterly Corporate Performance Report.
- 25 Most indicators within the framework remain unchanged from the previous plan. But there have been some tweaks to reflect the changes to our priorities. Indicators used by the Office for Local Government (Oflog) to monitor and support councils continue to be included.
- 26 However, we have changed the structure of our performance framework with indicators categorised as either primary (headline measures linked to achieving the priority) or secondary (reflect our demand pressures and/or contextual issues). We are developing targets for primary indicators based on local and national performance. We will complete this by March 2026 and targets will be included in future refreshed plans.
- 27 Our public consultation survey included questions about our communication. Respondents highlighted the topics they would like to hear more about – most of which are already regularly provided through our corporate reporting channels such as our website, our corporate publications such as Durham County News, our performance report, our social media channels, and regular updates and announcements on council services via regional media (TV, radio, press).
- 28 We also provide more localised information. For example, we have individual Facebook accounts for every Area Action Partnership, Neighbourhood Wardens area and Leisure Centre, and for venues such as our theatres. We are continuing to roll-out ownership of social media content to our services, and moving away from more traditional updates to shorter, snappier content. This increased accessibility means our messages reach more people.
- 29 We recognise that one size does not fit all. Our approach to wellbeing ensures we target support towards those most in need, whilst building capacity and resilience. We will continue to work with other organisations to reduce duplication and ensure greater impact. We will also work with service users and interested parties such as parents and carers to develop and shape services and initiatives. We are committed to doing things with communities rather than to them.

- 30 As a public authority, we must set equality objectives (as set out in the Equality Act 2010). These equality objectives must be reviewed every four years. The next review will be in 2028. These are also incorporated into the plan.

Best Value Standards

- 31 We are a well-functioning council (as described in [statutory guidance](#)²) and display certain characteristics. In relation to organisational planning, this includes:
- (a) an organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, driven by an established transformation function or programme, with frequent monitoring, performance reporting and updating of the corporate and improvement plans;
 - (b) a shared vision for the local area which has been co-produced with partners, businesses and communities to maximise resources and ensure best value across service areas;
 - (c) members who provide quality leadership by setting a clearly articulated, achievable and prioritised vision for officers to follow that puts place and local people at its heart. Senior officers have the capacity and capability to provide the council with effective strategic direction;
 - (d) early and meaningful engagement and effective collaboration with communities to identify and understand local needs and assets, and in decisions that affect the planning and delivery of services. In some cases, this involves the co-design and/or co-production of services;
 - (e) a corporate plan that is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation's performance to be measured and held to account. The authority's financial strategy and delivery arrangements are aligned with priorities in the corporate plan, and respond appropriately to local need, including the plans of partners and stakeholders;
 - (f) financial strategy and budgets that are clearly aligned with strategic priorities and a robust process for reviewing and setting the budget;
 - (g) service plans clearly linked to our priorities, strategic plans and longer-term planning – a golden thread that runs through to individual objectives and accountability;

² [Best Value Standards and Intervention](#)

- (h) partners and local residents are involved in developing indicators and targets, and monitoring and managing lack of performance. The council may be beginning to experiment with more participative forms of decision making.

Next Steps

- 32 Subject to feedback the Council Plan will move to the design phase. This stage sets the look and feel of the document, transforming it from a word document into a visually compelling document.
- 33 Once the Local Government Finance Settlement has been confirmed (expected second half of December), we will be able to update the finance sections of our plan. However, this will not be until January when the full implications of the settlement for the Council have been worked through.
- 34 The draft plan (designed version) will be presented to Cabinet on 15 January, and subject to Cabinet's endorsement, will progress to full Council for approval on 19 February 2025.

Conclusion

- 35 The draft Council Plan 2025-2029 contained in Appendix 3 sets out our priorities, key programmes of work and associated performance management arrangements for the forthcoming four years.
- 36 The Council Plan is the primary corporate planning document within our policy framework and constitutionally, requires approval by Council.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- [A Vision for County Durham 2035](#)
- [Current Council Plan \(2024 – 2028\)](#)

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Constitution of the council sets out the policy framework of the council which includes the council plan and performance management framework.

Finance

The council plan aligns to the council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which sets out how our priorities will be resourced. Any financial implications arising from the implementation of actions contained in the council plan are factored into the budget setting and MTFP planning processes.

Consultation

The council plan sets out the council's contribution to delivering the aims and objectives set out the County Durham Vision. The Vision was developed following an extensive three phase consultation where over 30,000 responses were considered, and which helped shape the final vision.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 requires the council to set out equality objectives and review every four years. The council plan sets out our equality objectives to identify and tackle discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Climate Change

The council plan contains a specific theme of "Our Environment" to elevate and highlight this important agenda and the work of the council in this area.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

Crime and disorder features as part of the proposed council plan.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

Risk management is an intrinsic part of the council's performance reporting arrangements.

Procurement

None

Appendix 2: Council Plan 2024 – 2028 Consultation Feedback

Public Survey responses

1. 307 people responded to our public consultation survey.
2. A breakdown of the characteristics of the responders is as follows:

Status

Resident	193	63%
Employee	99	32%
Community or voluntary organisation/group	3	1%
Business	2	1%
Statutory Organisation	2	1%
Town or Parish Council	1	0%
Elected member	1	0%
Other	3	1%
Not answered	3	1%

Gender

Male	98	36%
Female	171	64%
Not answered	38	12%

Age

Over 75	5	2%
65-74	29	9%
55-64	83	27%
45-54	64	21%
35-44	65	21%
25-34	24	8%
18-24	2	1%
Under 18	2	1%
Not answered	33	11%

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

No	217	71%
Yes	49	16%
Not answered	41	13%

Religion or belief

Christian	155	50%
Agnostic	1	0%
Buddhist	1	0%

Muslim	1	0%
Pagan	1	0%
Sikh	1	0%
Spiritualist	1	0%
No religion	101	33%
Not answered	45	15%

Ethnicity

White British	255	83%
White Non-British	5	2%
Asian or Asian British	3	1%
Black or Black British		0%
Arab or Middle Eastern		0%
Mixed Race		0%
Travelling Community	1	0%
Other	1	0%
Not answered	42	14%

Sexual orientation

Heterosexual/straight	231	75%
Gay or lesbian	9	3%
Bisexual	1	0%
Other	1	0%
Not answered	65	21%

3. Our survey consisted of eight questions. The first five questions focused on whether our priorities were the right ones, and the final three questions focused on how we can better communicate our ambitions and successes.
4. Feedback received for each question, and our response, is set out below.

For each of the ambitions, please tell us if you think these are the right priorities. Would you change or remove any of these priorities? Is there anything missing?

5. 307 people answered this question. Of these, 225 suggested at least one amendment (73%).
6. We can breakdown the responses by ambition, i.e. our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, our council.
7. Of those who stated they wanted to make a change, just under half (46%) focused on a single ambition. Five percent wanted to change priorities linked to every ambition.

Q1. Our Economy

8. 133 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our Economy.

- **Supporting people into education, training, jobs and to excel in their careers (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt this priority should be more specific. All referenced the need to help young people. There was a specific link to reducing re-offending by helping those furthest away from the labour market (such as young people not in education, employment or training, ex-offenders and people released from prison). Respondents suggested more apprenticeships, schools and businesses creating meaningful work experience, a dedicated careers service and more support for people with literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Our response:

This priority's wording has been changed to clarify 'people' refers to both young people and adults, include employment and self-employment, and to emphasise our focus on those with the greatest need.

- **Attracting additional businesses and jobs to strategic employment sites at Durham City Innovation District, Forrest Park, Jade Business Park, Integra 61, and the North East Technology Park (NETPark) (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents questioned the need for strategic employment sites. They felt smaller employment sites are able to offer a broad range of business opportunities and jobs, and that we should be encouraging businesses and jobs into towns and villages.

Our response:

Our Inclusive Economic Strategy sets out what our economy needs so everybody can benefit from growth and the county's success. The strategy is based on an Economic Review which provides a robust understanding of the economy's strengths and weaknesses, and the best opportunities to support future economic growth. This has led to the need for strategic employment sites. We will therefore be keeping this priority.

- **Investing in opportunities to regenerate and improve the vibrancy of towns and villages (eight responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Although respondents supported the priority, they felt it was not specific enough in terms of which locations would benefit. Some respondents felt their local area did not receive as much funding as other areas and was being 'left behind'. It was suggested that the priority be widened to include Durham City.

Our response:

We recognise the need for investment countywide, particularly in smaller towns and villages. We have adopted a new approach to empower our communities to shape the future of their towns and villages. This involves engaging with local people, businesses, and other stakeholders to establish a shared vision for each place. The resulting Strategic Place Plans (previously master plans) are live documents and supported by a combination of a spatial plan, investment plan and delivery plan ([link](#)). In relation to Durham City, we are developing a multi-stakeholder 'Durham City Vision' and action plan. We have reworded the priority to make it clearer.

- **Delivering strategic infrastructure including road, rail and broadband upgrades (seven responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Most respondents felt we should focus on existing infrastructure. One respondent felt infrastructure should be 'sustainable' and questioned why we were building more roads instead of reducing traffic. And one respondent requested more detail so they could see what is being delivered where.

Our response:

Our Inclusive Economic Strategy sets out what our economy needs so everybody can benefit from growth and the county's success. The strategy is based on an Economic Review which provides a robust understanding of the economy's strengths and weaknesses, and the best opportunities to support future economic growth. This has led to the need for strategic infrastructure. We will therefore be keeping this priority.

To reflect public consultation in relation to the condition of the highway, we have added the following priority 'improve the condition of the highways network.'

- **Supporting new and growing enterprises, innovative businesses, and improved levels of business productivity (one response).**

Consultation Feedback:

The respondent suggested our priority should be to support all businesses.

Our response:

We have broadened this priority to capture our work encouraging individuals to start a business within the county.

- **Developing opportunity sectors (three responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Two respondents suggested deleting this priority as they do not know what it means. The final respondent suggested more incentives for 'green' investment.

Our response:

'Green' jobs is one of the key areas of focus the council is targeting to maximise economic growth. Other areas include research and advanced manufacturing, life sciences and satellite applications sectors. We have changed the wording to make it clear what we mean by this priority.

- **Securing inward investments (one response).**

Consultation Feedback:

The respondent questioned what kind of investment is being secured as not all investment is good.

Our response:

We have changed the wording to clarify that the focus of this priority is attracting new businesses into the county and creating jobs.

- **Promoting the county to visitors, businesses, and investors (four responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent highlighted North Road provides a poor first impression for people arriving by bus or train. There was concern that increased tourism and investors could lead to more congestion and an increase in houses prices as more become holiday homes / lets.

Our response:

We are developing a multi-stakeholder 'Durham City Vision'. The action plan will include various public realm projects.

- **Develop the next phase of the 62 hectare Aykley Heads site to create a Durham Innovation District (14 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

All respondents suggested deleting this priority. Most felt there were more appropriate locations in other areas with better transport links.

Our response:

Our Inclusive Economic Strategy sets out what our economy needs so everybody can benefit from growth and the county's success. The strategy is based on an Economic Review which provides a robust understanding of the economy's strengths and weaknesses, and the best opportunities to support future economic growth. Aykley Heads is part of this growth plan. We will therefore be keeping this priority.

- **Supporting the development of more visitor attractions and year-round tourism (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt we should focus on the attractions we already have and/or regenerating our towns and villages.

Our response:

Our Inclusive Economic Strategy sets out what our economy needs so everybody can benefit from growth and the county's success. The strategy is based on an Economic Review which provides a robust understanding of the economy's strengths and weaknesses, and the best opportunities to support future economic growth. Our arts, culture and tourism sectors have huge growth potential. We will therefore be keeping this priority.

Q2. Our Environment

9. 120 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our Environment.

- **Move toward a carbon neutral County Durham by 2045 (one response).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent felt we should not be pursuing this ambition.

Our response:

We have replaced the words 'carbon neutral' with 'net zero' to match the terminology used in other documents linked to climate change, carbon reduction and sustainability. We have also added words to reflect our focus on increasing levels of nature recovery.

- **Continue to work with and encourage all residents and businesses to reuse, recycle, and adopt sustainable practices (nine responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents were supportive of this priority but wanted to the priority broadened to include specific actions such as food waste collections, free green waste / bulky waste collections, clothing donation points in the community, more recycling centres, with drop off points in smaller villages, and improved access to recycling facilities (particularly for those without their own transport). One respondent also suggested rewarding those who recycle and carry out educational campaigns across schools.

Our response:

We have considered the specific actions mentioned above at various times. It is worth noting that the county has more recycling centres than similar authorities and this provision was recently reviewed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) exercise. It was agreed to retain this provision as it is as this is the most cost-effective model. Our new site (Stainton Grove) has pedestrian access. And although we have assessed older HWRCs for pedestrian access, it is not feasible / safe to install. The original priority is being retained with no change.

- **Reduce spikes in pollution experienced by certain areas at certain times (eight responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

There were two main comments. Some respondents thought the priority was too vague – which areas at which times. Others felt this priority was a duplication of our priority to improve the air quality of Durham City Centre.

Our response:

The priority has been deleted as we feel the action is adequately covered elsewhere.

- **Develop infrastructure to make cycling and walking viable modes of transportation and encourage residents to embrace it (24 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents were broadly in favour of this priority but acknowledged this is difficult with such a vast county. Respondents did put forward suggestions to help with this priority - low traffic speeds in residential areas, a 'park and stride' option to support walking and cycling, and better integration of cycling and buses / rail.

However, many felt that walking and cycling are not always viable for those in rural areas with disabilities, and reiterated the need for reliable public transport. And some respondents were concerned the

council would introduce a scheme such as ULEZ and that there would be a cost to drivers.

One respondent felt the focus should be existing infrastructure, which should be inclusive to mobility scooters.

Our response:

Two new priorities relating to bus provision have been added to the council plan – one relating to bus reform and one to bus services. Our new 'Move Together' Strategy will encourage people to walk, cycle and run more often, and we have 11 local cycling / walking infrastructure plans which set out long-term development in place.

We have no plans to introduce a ULEZ scheme or similar.

Our new capital schemes are DDA compliant. Residents can also request improvements such as dropped kerbs / disabled access through our operational teams.

This priority is being retained with no changes.

- **Improve the air quality in Durham City Centre (17 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt cheaper bus fares would make public transport more attractive which would help improve air quality. Some respondents were concerned the council would introduce a scheme such as ULEZ and that there would be a cost to drivers. One respondent asked if we could expand this to include other areas such as Seaham?

Our response:

Two new priorities relating to buses have been added to the council plan – one relating to bus reform and one to bus services. Improving air quality in Durham City remains a corporate priority with an action plan and air quality management area. We are currently revising the air quality action plan (happens every 5 years). We have no plans to introduce a ULEZ scheme or similar. The priority has been retained with no changes.

- **Decarbonisation of council buildings (nine responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Most felt the priority is too narrow and should include other elements of council operations, not just buildings.

Our response:

We have broadened the priority so it includes both 'buildings and operations' and made clear our intention to make the council net zero by 2030.

- **Encourage the use of our natural environment to improve health and well-being (four responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents queried how this would happen. Would it be promoting the areas as they are or would it be by investing in these areas to improve and make more accessible.

Our response:

We have changed the wording of this priority to clarify our action. Managing, maintaining and improving our network of footpaths, bridleways and by-ways will allow more people to visit the outdoors to improve their health and wellbeing.

10. We also received feedback which does not fit with our existing priorities within the 'Our Environment' ambition. We have reviewed this feedback as per the following paragraphs.

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents also wanted us to prioritise actions to improve our natural environment. This included requests to cut grass and hedges less often, not use weedkiller, stop landowners burning heather, restore peatlands, plant more wildflowers on grass verges and disused land, carry out more creative planting in town centres, and develop more allotments on brown belt. One respondent suggested encouraging residents to take responsibility for local green areas (which could lead to savings for the council).

Respondents felt we could do more to protect rural areas and the green belt. Suggestions included policy changes for house building and conservation areas, redeveloping empty, older buildings instead of building new, creating more wildlife friendly areas, increasing tree planting, and new housing developments with enough parking so residents don't pave over gardens.

Respondents also wanted us to encourage energy efficiency through rewards and planning changes (e.g., all new builds to have) and to help those in terraced housing, without a drive or garage, access electric vehicle chargers.

Our response:

We have added three new priorities to the council plan in line with comments received through the public consultation and which reflect our existing work. These are:

- Implement a countywide Local Nature Recovery Strategy which sets out our priorities for nature recovery and wider environmental goals.

- Take action to conserve and increase levels of nature recovery across the council's estate and County Durham
- Work with key strategic partners to replace technologies using fossil fuels with electrically powered equivalents, such as electric vehicles and heat pumps.

Q3. Our People

11. 53 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our People.

- **Ensure a joined-up service for health and social care (three responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents were unsure what this means for residents. Is it an improved service? A faster service?

Our response:

This is a key priority for the council and as such we will continue to work toward achieving this through focused actions in our service plans. We have changed the wording to 'work with our partners across health and social care to create better services based on local need.' This will make our priority clearer.

- **Reduce the harm caused by drug and alcohol addiction through targeted support and appropriate treatment programmes (two responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt there should be more focus on prevention and education.

Our response:

This action has been deleted as we feel it is covered by another existing priority – 'help people live well for longer by making smoking history, enabling healthy weight for all, improving mental health and reducing alcohol harms.' This will be achieved by actions which include prevention and education.

- **Improve health and well-being, with reduced health inequality (seven responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents were unsure what this means. Is it to make people healthier, happier? One respondent believed the council could not achieve this as they are not responsible for health care. And others

raised concern that targeting children and young people who are overweight / obese could lead to eating disorders.

Our response:

We have a public health function. We have changed the wording to 'improve health and well-being, with reduced health inequality between people and communities.' This will make the priority clearer.

- **Safeguard vulnerable individuals from abuse and support victims of anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder (three responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt this priority should have a specific focus on prevention. One respondent requested that vulnerable people be expanded to include those with dementia.

Our response:

We have changed the wording of this priority to match the overarching strategic action of Anti-Social Behaviour strategy which focuses on 'improving lives through tackling anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder that impacts our communities.' This priority will be achieved by actions which include prevention.

- **Ensure that we meet the needs of children and young people affected by domestic abuse in safe accommodation (two responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent suggested expanding this priority to include Violence Against Women and Girls. The other respondent suggested we make specific reference to cared-for children as too many end up in the criminal justice system. It was also suggested we changed the wording to "care for and protect the needs of young people..." as it sounds warmer and kinder.

Our response:

We have broadened this priority to include all children and young people. The new priority is 'ensure that all children and young people are protected and, if necessary, provided with safe and loving homes.' We also added a new priority to 'adopt care experience as a protected characteristic.'

- **Increase benefit take-up to support people whose circumstances make them vulnerable (two responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

It was suggested that we consider changing the wording from benefit take-up to 'access to welfare support' as it sounds kinder and less process driven.

Our response:

We have changed 'increase benefit take-up' to 'improve access to welfare, advice and guidance'.

- **Help people live well for longer by making smoking history, enabling healthy weight for all, improving mental health and reducing alcohol harms (two responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent suggested we should focus on promoting healthy lifestyles and encouraging people to take ownership of this in their lifestyle choices. Another felt we should have a more triangulated approach to mental ill-health – for example, we record suicides but do not follow-up those who attempted suicide.

Our response:

Although the priority is being retained with no change, we are looking at the comment relating to a triangulated approach to mental ill-health, outside of this process.

- **Develop family hubs and the best start in life programme to deliver integrated family support (no response)**

Consultation Feedback:

None

Our response:

The family hubs are now operational and our focus is now on delivering support. 'Develop' has therefore been changed to 'Deliver integrated family support through.'

- **Make better use of technology throughout our social care system helping people to live independently (one response).**

Consultation Feedback:

The respondent put forward alternative words – 'embrace technological advancements in social care that enable and prolong independent living.'

Our response:

We have combined this priority to other existing priorities which also help people to live independently. The single priority states we will 'help people live independently for longer through preventative

services, better use of technology and more homes for older and disabled people.'

- **Deliver more homes for older and disabled people (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt that all new housing developments should include smaller purpose built quality accommodation for young and older people, and they should have a pleasant external environment for stimulation and improved mental and physical health.

Our response:

We have combined this priority to other existing priorities which also help people to live independently. The single priority states we will 'help people live independently for longer through preventative services, better use of technology and more homes for older and disabled people.' We are looking at the comment relating to a pleasant external environment, outside of this process.

12. We also received feedback which does not fit with our existing priorities within the 'Our People' ambition. We have reviewed this feedback as per the following paragraphs.

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents suggested social care should be a priority due to its high spend, and suggested more support is needed for older and disabled people and more specialist care for younger people with dementia, specialist neuro-support (post-diagnosis autism and ADHD). They also wanted reduced waiting lists.

Our response:

We have added one new priority to the council plan in line with comments received through the public consultation and which reflect our existing work. This is:

- Improve the care options available to people with a learning disability or mental health illness, and reduce high cost permanent care solutions.

Q4. Our Communities

13. 122 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our Communities.

- **Better transport links in rural areas (eight responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt that buses need to be more reliable with more routes and better connectivity, at times when people want to travel, more affordable, and countywide not just rural areas. This would be of particular benefit to rural areas, outlying villages and for disabled people. One respondent questioned how this can happen if there is no funding.

Our response:

We have replaced this priority with two new priorities relating to buses. One relates to bus reform (and is being led by the North East Combined Authority), The other relates to investment in bus services and is being led by the council. Both priorities will be countywide.

- **More digital connectivity (two responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt that many residents do not have the digital skills to make use of this. And that the focus should be on 'greater, stronger and faster' rather than 'more'.

Our response:

We have expanded the priority so there is more focus on digital inclusion (both hardware and skills) as well as connectivity. We intend to change the wording to 'support greater digital inclusion through connectivity, hardware and skills.'

- **Community engagement and co-production (five responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Most respondents felt that community engagement and involvement is more important than ever. However, not all respondents understood what this means.

Our response:

We have changed the wording of this priority to make it clearer what this means – 'work with our communities to jointly make decisions or create services that work for them.'

- **Establishing local network panels to further engage and empower local communities (one response)**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt that community engagement and involvement is more important than ever. One respondent was unsure how these panels fit into the infrastructure already in place.

Our response:

We continue to support community engagement and involvement. To make our aims clearer, we have changed the wording of this priority to 'continue building on our Area Action Partnerships with new community networks, supported by grant funding, to give our communities more say on local priorities.'

- **Developing neighbourhood interventions to tackle low level crime and anti-social behaviour, housing and environmental issues to make our communities safer (four responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent felt there should be more emphasis on tackling anti-social behaviour as it has such a big impact on communities and residents' mental health. One respondent suggested we do this by tackling problematic tenants through our selective licensing scheme. Another suggested we adopt a zero tolerance approach to begging, anti-social behaviour and petty crime linked to drug and alcohol addiction.

Our response:

This priority is being retained with no change. This is a place based priority and complements our priority: 'improving lives through tackling anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder that impacts on our communities.'

- **£52 million leisure transformation programme with projects completed or underway at Abbey, Spennymoor, Teesdale and Peterlee Leisure Centres, a new track and pavilion at Shildon and permission approved for a new leisure, wellbeing hub and library at Bishop Auckland (14 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents suggested more provision is needed including more facilities for children and young people, and a centralised club culture. Respondents also commented that leisure centres need to be affordable and good transport links are needed to get there.

Our response:

We have amended the wording to acknowledge the programme is now £62 million. We have also deleted those elements that have been completed to make it clear what is left to do. The comments relating to transport links will be covered under the new priorities relating to bus provision that have been added to the council plan.

- **Building more council homes (11 responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents supported this priority but many felt it should be expanded to include affordable home and supported accommodation. It was also noted that housing is critical to reduce re-offending. Some respondents requested the priority be more specific – how many? For whom? One respondent felt we should focus on redeveloping existing areas instead of creating new, and another that we need to consider regenerating, acquiring and demolishing dilapidated low demand housing around the county.

Our response:

We have retained the priority but changed ‘homes’ to ‘houses.’ Reference the feedback in relation to ‘regenerating, acquiring and demolishing dilapidated low demand housing’ – funding has now been secured and this will be happening in Horden.

- **Delivering the Bishop Auckland Heritage Zone, Future High Street Fund and Stronger Towns Fund (three responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt initiatives should be countywide rather than confined to one area. One respondent was unsure what this action was.

Our response:

The Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone and Future High Street Fund have been completed. We have added them to the achievement section of the new council plan with weblinks so more detail can be accessed. These have been removed from the priority to make it clear that only the Stronger Towns Fund Programme has yet to be achieved. Our Strategic Place Plans and the Durham City Vision will set out developments countywide.

- **Supply Seaham Garden Village development with geothermal heat from mine water treatment scheme (six responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent felt this priority would sit better under ‘our environment. Another asked why this is priority. The third questioned whether this will be happening in other areas.

Our response:

This priority has links to both ‘our environment’ and ‘our communities’. It is a flagship project which will be a blueprint for further rollout so we intend to keep the priority as it is. Heat networks, the lowest cost solution for decarbonising heat, can connect to different heat sources such as deep geothermal, sewage, river etc. Each source is assessed so the lowest cost network can be

constructed. We have identified five Heat Network Zones (HNZ) (Durham City, Seaham, Newton Aycliffe, Chester le Street and Peterlee). Regulation to enable councils to mandate connection for non-commercial buildings and new construction in HNZs is expected in 2025. We are also looking at a mine water project in Horden which is community led and driven.

- **Introduce a corporate employee volunteering scheme in Durham County Council (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents had opposing views about this. Some felt employees volunteering in council time meant taxpayers are paying for people to do other things. One respondent suggested a region-wide scheme for anyone to participate in.

Our response:

The scheme has now been introduced so the priority has been deleted.

14. We also received feedback which does not fit with our existing priorities within the 'Our Community' ambition. We have reviewed this feedback as per the following paragraphs.

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents wanted more emphasis on clean, tidy, well-maintained communities. With less litter, fly-tipping, dog-fouling, graffiti and general untidiness, and fewer overgrown bushes and trees. Suggestions to achieve included more litter and dog bins, more frequent litter-picking, more community projects such as scrub clearance, and using CCTV and local community support for enforcement.

Our response:

We have added two new priorities to the council plan in line with comments received through the public consultation and which reflect our existing work. These are:

- Work with our communities to encourage everyone to play a part in enhancing the local environment.
- Reduce environmental crime through improved intelligence, greater education and awareness, and tougher enforcement measures.

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents also wanted community facilities that support children and young people with things to do, help tackle loneliness of older people, and support new mothers and their babies. More youth clubs, sports and art activities were suggested to keep young people active and away from anti-social behaviour.

Our response:

We believe that community facilities is adequately covered by existing actions. But we have proposed adding the additional priority which reflects the work we are doing through our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

- Reduce homelessness through targeted early intervention, making more homes available and improving access for our most vulnerable households.

Q5. Our Council

15. 54 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our Council.

- **Balancing our budget (four responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Four people who commented on this priority. One believed we can't deliver our services and still balance the budget. One believed we should provide greater financial support for carers, adult social care, early years and children, school building upgrades, and children with special educational needs. One felt the priority should focus on getting the best out of the budget. And one suggested we work more with other councils to save on costs of staff, software and buildings.

Our response:

The council is legally required to set an annual budget that is 'balanced'. This means the amount we expect to spend is no more than the amount we expect to receive. Balancing our budget is becoming increasingly difficult so we will be retaining this priority.

- **Providing high quality, value for money services (six responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt we could save money with better use of existing experienced staff rather than external companies, marketing and consultancy.

Our response:

The council is a well-functioning authority and operates in line with Best Value Standards. We strive for continuous improvement in the way we carry out our functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We will retain this priority.

- **Digital by Design – providing online services with an alternative for those unable to access the internet (seven responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Most respondents felt we needed to keep alternatives as many people do not have the skills to use online services.

Our response:

We intend to delete this priority as it is an element of 'providing high quality value for money services.' We will address digital skills through our priority to 'support greater digital inclusion through connectivity, hardware and skills.' Technology is becoming increasingly important in all aspects of people's lives, and we believe we can use technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our services. We therefore intend to add a new priority to reflect this – 'using technology to make our services both effective and efficient.'

- **Creating a more data-driven council (11 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Most respondents didn't know what this meant or what benefit would be gained from adopting such an approach. Some respondents felt councils should be 'person-centred' and being 'data-driven' could mean staff not having time to support customers in the best way possible.

Our response:

We have reworded this priority to 'maximise the benefits of the data we hold to help us drive better services and value for money.' The new wording makes it clearer what we are trying to achieve.

- **A workforce that can meet future challenges (eight responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents suggested we should focus on developing our workforce, ensuring it is efficient and able to seize opportunities.

Our response:

The priority will be achieved by actions that include workforce development, efficiency measures and seizing opportunities, so the existing wording is appropriate. However, we intend to combine this priority with another existing priority (health and well-being of our workforce) to create a single priority - 'a healthy workforce that can meet future challenges.'

- **Health and wellbeing of our workforce – achieve Better Health at Work Award Ambassador Status (nine responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents recognised the need for work/life balance and for the workforce to be both healthy and happy. However, they felt 'Better

Health at Work Award Ambassador Status' was a box-ticking exercise and/or a wasteful use of money.

Our response:

We are focused on the health and wellbeing of our workforce. 'Better Health at Work Award Ambassador Status' is only one element of this. We have combined this priority with another existing priority (a workforce that can meet future challenges) to create a single priority - 'a healthy workforce that can meet future challenges.'

Q6: Thinking about our priorities, which do you think residents would like to learn more about?

- 16. 307 people answered this question.
- 17. We can breakdown the responses by ambition, i.e. our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, our council. Most respondents said they would like to learn about more than one ambition.

Our Economy	Our Environment	Our People	Our Communities	Our Council
176	183	195	233	177

- 37. 68 respondents suggested specific topics which they felt residents would benefit from knowing more about. These can be broadly categorised as follows:

Priority or performance issue	Number	%
How the council spends its money	20	29%
The difference the council makes.	18	26%
What is happening in each of our communities	13	19%
Environmental issues	8	12%
Employment and training opportunities	4	6%
New housing development	3	4%
Publish all consultation responses	1	1%
Member voting record	1	1%

Our response:

Much of the information respondents suggested is already provided on a regular basis.

We use a range of corporate reporting channels - through our website, our corporate publications such as Durham County News, our performance report, our social media channels, and regular updates

and announcements on council services via regional media (TV, radio, press).

Many of our social media channels are now localised. For example, we have individual Facebook accounts for each Area Action Partnership, Neighbourhood Wardens, each Leisure Centre and venues such as our theatres.

We are exploring ways to make information more visible. We have used weblinks extensively throughout our Council Plan to direct the reader to relevant supporting content on our website. For example, our achievement '[Increased our low cost surplus food hubs \(The Bread Butter Thing\) to 20](#)' links to our webpage to 'help with food costs'.

Q7: How would you want us to share what people think about the quality of our services?

38 307 people answered this question. Just over a third (109 respondents) said they would like us to share information about the quality of our services (35%).

39 Of these, the majority suggested sharing the information digitally – most favoured publishing the information on our website and /or social media accounts. Some people suggested using both digital and non-digital channels – mainly due to a perceived view that not everybody is able to use digital methods.

	number	%
Digital	95	72%
- Published on social media and/or our website.	80	61%
- Email to residents.	15	11%
Non-digital	37	28%
- face to face (at public meetings or events).	7	5%
- hard copies available to collect from community buildings.	10	7%
- hard copies posted to residents.	13	10%
- Other, e.g., TV, radio, newspapers, bus shelters	7	5%

Our response:

We continue to provide a range of mechanisms to share information. We are continuing to roll-out ownership of social media content to our services. We are moving away from more traditional updates to shorter,

snappier content. This increased accessibility means our messages reach more people.

We are considering other non-digital communication methods - paper copies of our major strategies (such as the inclusive economic strategy) and documents (such as the corporate performance report) in all public facing council buildings. Better use of pop-ups and digital screens in our leisure centres and Customer Access Points.

Q8: Is the plan easy to read and easy to understand?

40 The vast majority of respondents found the plan both easy to read (87%) and easy to understand (81%).

	Yes	No
	244	37
Easy to read	87%	13%
	225	52
Easy to understand	81%	19%

41 49 people suggested ways in which we could make the plan easier to read and understand.

Consultation Feedback

Nineteen respondents (39%) felt our wording could be simpler and more concise. Examples of phrases which made no sense to the reader includes 'Developing opportunity sectors' and 'securing inward investment'.

Our response:

We have committed to writing all council documents in plain English. Occasionally, more complex words and phrases are used in error. We have corrected the examples used above and our communications team have proof-read the document to ensure all wording is non-technical and can be understood by everybody as far as possible.

Consultation Feedback

Seventeen respondents (35%) felt our plan would be enhanced if we included more detail as to what we were doing. This mainly related to people wanting to know where something would happen. For example, where would we improve bus services, where do we plan to build houses.

Our response:

Our plan is deliberately kept high level so it is easy to read. It has been designed to give the reader an immediate sense of our strategic direction and what we are intending to do. A range of supporting council and partnership strategies and council service plans will provide the detail of how we all deliver our priorities. Supporting strategies are named in the plan so that those wishing to receive further information can via hyperlinks or by contacting the council for accessible versions.

Consultation Feedback

Ten respondents (20%) suggested practical design changes to make the plan easier to read and understand. Suggestions were using videos to explain what we are trying to achieve, adding a summary page to the plan, and making it mobile phone friendly so people are read it on smaller screens.

Our response:

We have included a 'plan on a page' in this year's plan. This high level summary will let people see at a glance, what we are trying to achieve. We are using animations to communicate with staff, our partners and the public.

Responses from the Children in Care Council.

- 42 The Children in Care Council (CICC) exists to give children in care and care-leavers a voice and help them to have a say in the way their care service is run.
- 43 All children and young people who are looked after across the county are automatically members of the CICC and can take part in discussions and issues raised.
- 44 We asked the CICC what they thought of the current Council Plan. Respondents were split into groups by age.
- 45 The younger group fed back important words and what they meant to them.

Motivational: this word was shared as an important word to explain what the plan could do.

Respect: Respecting what we can do for children and young people we care for.

Stigma: Use words to challenge stigma.

Kind: Words or sentences to show kindness of the council was view as important.

- Caring: 'We are a caring council'.
Honest: Make sure the words are honest and can be followed by everyone.
Love: To love and care for all children and young people.

The following sentence was put forward to help us think about recognising children and young people in the plan. It was:

The plan is about everyone, helping children and young people we care for to be the best.

- 46 The older group stripped the plan back using a visual aid and shared their thoughts about the plan, including some sentences for consideration. Key points are:
- help care leavers with equipment, furniture, food plans, budgeting and life skills. Open new opportunities for all ages and all people. Open new centres so people can interact and socialise.
 - support care leavers, by providing life skill sessions, provide leaving packages that include things to help them have an accommodation and provide centres that help people with everyday life.
 - 'Our people are our children. We care for them and this plan is about them and their future'.
 - 'We will support the young people in care to have a better future'.
 - More clubs because some people may be bored in their house all the time, more money for college because people may not be able to afford it! Different activities, youth clubs, more help when buying a house.
 - 'We as a council think children in care and leaving are important'.
 - More community activities, more opportunities for people/youths, more job opportunities. To support care leavers.
 - 'I would like to recommend some of the following actions to benefit the care leavers, these include...life skills, packages including cheap food and some gardening practise to benefit their skills as well as an improvement in environment'.
- 47 We are currently defining a high level priority relating to children in care. This will give greater visibility to these children and increase focus on their needs. The detail will be considered a part of the refresh of our corporate parenting strategy.

48 Children are a top priority for us and our refreshed Council Plan includes priorities which reflect our commitment to create a nurturing environment where all children can grow, develop and thrive. Priorities which specifically impact Children in Care include:

- Ensure that all children and young people are protected and, if necessary, provided with safe and loving homes.
- Adopt care experience as a protected characteristic.
- Improve access to welfare, advice and guidance to support residents whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Support children and young people facing disadvantage to achieve the highest possible levels of educational attainment.
- Support young people and adults to move into education, training, employment and self-employment, prioritising those with the greatest need.

Appendix 3: Draft Council Plan 2025-29

Council Plan 2025-29

Championing our economy, our environment, our people, our communities and our council

Foreword

County Durham is a place like no other.

Our identity has been forged over generations, but our sense of pride is just as much about our hopes and ambitions for the future as it is about our history and heritage. The historic land of the Prince Bishops has become the home of industrial and technological innovation, economic reinvention and world class education, and our internationally renowned heritage and cultural offer has been recognised with our role as lead for culture, creative, tourism and sport within the North East Combined Authority.

This plan which follows the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government statutory guidance regarding delivering “best value,” sets out our bold ambitions for place shaping, by building upon the considerable strengths of our people and communities, our culture and our economy, to make County Durham an even better place to live, work, study and visit. It outlines how we will achieve our vision of more and better jobs, people living long, healthy and independent lives within safe, vibrant communities, a county that is net zero, and a council which is both efficient and effective.

Our plan for shaping County Durham and the places within it is based upon five key themes – the economy, environment, people, communities, and the council - with the aim of making County Durham a thriving, safe, caring, and green place to be.

And we are proud to say that we are delivering on our ambitions, a list of some of the key achievements in the past 12 months can be found in Appendix 2. We have invested millions of pounds in upgrading our road network, particularly on key strategic routes, and improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists through improved infrastructure on dedicated walking and cycling routes.

We are continuing to develop the Aykley Heads site and create a Durham Innovation District where businesses will have access to talent, networks and resources within a setting that combines high quality infrastructure with a strong community feel. Relocating our headquarters to the Rivergreen Centre will free up the current county hall site for development, and create a more sustainable workplace for the council. We’ve signed up our first tenant for the multi-million-pound phase 3 of our world-leading North East Technology Park (NETPark) in Sedgefield as we look to attract further investment into the area. And we’ve also supported small businesses through our retail start-up grants.

We have transformed our leisure centres with the introduction of state-of-art facilities and opened The Story, as the new gateway to the history of County Durham realising an ambitious plan to bring together five historic collections covering hundreds of years of everyday life in the county, and to create a new home for our registration service. The former Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Museum and Art Gallery on the Aykley Heads site is being redeveloped as a new meeting place and creative hub, which will offer high quality art and contemporary culture, including nationally significant exhibitions.

Our adult social care provision has been rated as good by the Care Quality Commission, while Ofsted inspectors have praised our support for care leavers and rated our new specialist home for care leavers as outstanding.

We’ve also committed to installing a further 250 more EV charging points across the county as part of our Climate Change Emergency Response Plan (CERP3), which includes 200 further actions to tackle climate change.

But, for all the county's great attributes, the legacy of post-industrial decline in areas previously dominated by mining and heavy industry can still be felt, and issues of inequality and deprivation are a very real challenge in many of our communities.

Our plan seeks to build on our strengths, but also address our weaknesses. It sets out how we will tackle inequality and discrimination, provide opportunity, and ensure no one is left behind.

Health and wellbeing is at the centre of our plans for the future, with a focus on the key public health priorities of reducing smoking and alcohol use, promoting healthy weight and supporting good mental health.

We also know that we must be ready to respond to unexpected events, such as the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of climate change, as well as planning for known changes driven by an ageing population, and growing demand and expectation for public services.

We recognise economic opportunities, such as greater use of digitisation, artificial intelligence and automation, alongside the move toward a low carbon economy.

We cannot meet all these challenges or leverage these opportunities to shape the county alone. To this end, we have built strong and progressive partnerships, forged on the sense of pride in our unique county. The County Durham Partnership and new North East Combined Authority are two examples of how we work successfully to deliver progressive outcomes.

This plan builds on the work of the council, our partners and our communities over recent years. It underpins the County Durham Vision 2035 and sets out our contribution to the collective drive to achieve long-term change across the county.

The plan shows we are looking to the future, working hard to achieve our ambitions and creating a resident-focused culture that actively listens to the needs and feedback of our communities.

Welcome to our plan.

Councillor Amanda Hopgood
Leader of the Council

John Hewitt
Chief Executive

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Appendices:

1. Our measures of success
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Plan on a Page

Our vision: A place where there are more and better jobs, people live long, healthy and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.

<p>£</p> <p>Our Economy</p> <p>We want to create a sustainable, inclusive economy with a diverse range of more and better jobs that meet all skills levels. With targeted training and learning programmes tailored to our employment specialisms and the needs of our businesses. We will deliver these new jobs, by developing our major employment sites and opportunity sectors, and developing our excellent tourism and cultural offer. We will give our children and young people the education and training they need to access these opportunities.</p>	<p></p> <p>Our Environment</p> <p>We want to protect and restore our natural environment, including biodiversity and healthy ecosystems. We declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed to reduce our carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and contribute towards a net zero county by 2045. We declared an ecological emergency in 2022 and committed to address ecological decline. Our county has significant landscape and ecological value and supports unique combinations of plant and animal species.</p>	<p></p> <p>Our People</p> <p>We want to help our residents live long and independent lives and remain in good health for as long as possible. We will protect and improve health by tackling the leading causes of illness and early death, inequalities and the challenges around mental health. We will ensure a sustainable high-quality care market and invest in a multi-million pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.</p>	<p></p> <p>Our Communities</p> <p>We want our communities to be well connected and supportive of each other, with vibrant and accessible towns and villages which are well-used, clean, attractive and safe. We will ensure our residents shape the places they live and are involved in making the decisions that affect them , We will support our most vulnerable residents, particularly those isolated or financially vulnerable. We will maintain a strong focus on tackling poverty.</p>	<p></p> <p>Our Council</p> <p>We want to be an excellent council with effective governance arrangements, a good grip on our performance and finances, a workforce fit for the future making best use of the latest technology to provide an effective service and that listens to the views of our residents and service users.</p>
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The County Durham Approach to Wellbeing
 Improving wellbeing through community centred approaches that put people at the heart of everything we do.

Our values and behaviours



Outcome Focused: We work together to achieve the best for people
 People Focused: We put people and communities at the heart of everything we do
 Empowering: We value, trust and support each other
 Innovative: We embrace change and look for better ways to deliver services

Our vision

A place where there are more and better jobs, people live long, healthy and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.

The above is set out in the [vision for County Durham 2019-2035](#) which was developed with residents and partners. It sets out our collective vision and long-term ambitions for the county:

- **More and Better Jobs**
- **People live longer and independent lives**
- **Connected communities**

which is delivered through the County Durham Partnership.

To help us manage our contribution to this partnership vision, we have a strategic planning framework.

The framework helps the council set ambitions and objectives from the highest corporate level to the bottom functional level. It consists of a series of plans which are aligned throughout the organisation (golden thread). At the top of the framework is the Council Plan (underpinning the County Durham Vision).

The Council Plan

The council plan describes how we will achieve this vision and our role in place shaping across the county. Written in line with the council's financial strategy (the MTFP), our plan is based on a strategic assessment of need using our intelligence platform [Durham Insight](#) as our evidence base. It also sets out how we will become more efficient and fit for the future.

Supporting strategies

These are key to achieving our ambitions across specific key areas, the county and places within it. Examples include Inclusive Economic Strategy, Climate Emergency Response Plan, Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Safe Durham Partnership Strategy, Housing Strategy, Workforce Strategy. Links to the relevant strategies are provided throughout this document.

Service and improvement plans

Service plans describe the role of each service in delivering the vision, alongside any plans to improve our existing high quality services and improvements across the county and places within it.

Project plans

Project plans contain more detail of a specific programme. Every employee is given tasks as part of the supervision process.

Teams and individuals

The annual Performance Development Review (PDR) process sets out an individual's contribution to achieving our corporate objectives.

About County Durham

County Durham is a great place to live, work, study and visit. It is largely rural with some of the lowest population densities in the country. It also has a strong sense of community.

The Durham Dales covers almost half of the county. Most of this area is designated as the North Pennines National Landscape which is one of the most remote and unspoilt places in England. With a stunning landscape and intriguing imprints of a mining and industrial past, the area is also a UNESCO Global Geopark due to its outstanding geology.



Key locations

1. High Force Waterfall
2. Durham Dales, North Pennines National Landscape
3. Barnard Castle and Bowes Museum
4. Raby Castle
5. Beamish Museum
6. Binchester Roman Fort
7. Locomotion
8. Durham Castle and Cathedral
9. International Cricket Ground
10. Sedgfield Racecourse
11. Auckland Castle, Spanish Gallery, Kynren

Our county sits at the heart of the North East. It has the biggest population and the strongest economic connectivity from the Tyne to the Tees. There are fast and reliable transport links: A1(M), A19(T), A66(T), East Coast mainline, and two international airports nearby. There is also a local port at Seaham Harbour, major ports on the Tyne and Wear, and a freeport at Teesside.

Thirty years ago, the county's economy centred around mining and heavy industry. Now, the focus is green technology, innovative business and manufacturing, high tech opportunities such as NETPark, and a growing heritage, culture, and visitor economy. The county is moving forward. But our industrial past has left us with challenges around deprivation and inequality. Our county is ranked the 26th most deprived area in England for employment and the 42nd most deprived for income (of 151 upper tier local authorities, 2019). The levels of deprivation vary across the county.

You can access further data, information and analysis about the county and the communities on it at [Durham Insight](#).

Key facts about the County

532,200

Our population has grown by 3.7% since 2011. 18.7% is under 17. 21.7% is over 65.

250,000

Households

22,199

Children living in poverty (19.3%). Nationally 19.5% live in poverty

£10.6 billion

Gross Value Added (GVA)¹. Makes up 16.7% of the total across the North East.

14,580

Active businesses

72.4%

Employment rate for people aged 16 to 64. Nationally the rate is 76%

£28,411

Average annual earnings. Compares to an England average of £31,840.

£134,000

Average house price. The average price of a property in England is £302,000. (December 2023)

1:5

Housing affordability ratio. The England average is 9:1

68%

residents with Level 2 qualification (five or more GCSE passes) or equivalent. Compared to an England average of 69%

5%

16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training. Compared to 2.6% nationally.

57%

Reduction in county CO₂ emissions since 1990

¹ Value of goods and services produced in an area.

County Durham has unique characteristics

- Durham Heritage Coast
- The rivers Wear and Tees
- The Durham Dales, North Pennines National Landscape and UNSECO Global Geopark

We have:

- A large and diverse county with some of the lowest population densities in the country: of 300 recognised settlements, only 23 have a population of 5,000 or more
- Some of the most remote and unspoilt countryside in England, in an area of great ecological significance, with nationally recognised dark skies ideal for stargazing. The North Pennines National Landscape, part of the Durham Dales is also a UNESCO Global Geopark due to its outstanding geology which can be seen at the magnificent High Force Waterfall
- The two main Durham Dales of Weardale and Teesdale take their name from the rivers Wear and Tees that both travel eastward through the county before entering the North Sea along the Durham Heritage Coast
- Dramatic landscape and seascape along the Durham Heritage Coast with beaches, rugged cliffs and imposing headlands, internationally recognised for its rare plants and wildlife
- Durham Castle and Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Durham University, a globally outstanding centre of teaching and research

About the council

We have an annual budget of around £1.3 billion. We use this money to deliver improvements across the county and the places within it. We also provide more than 800 services to more than 532,200 people.

adult social care | adult learning | allotments | archives | bereavement services | children's social care | carers | climate change | commissioning | community safety | consumer protection | culture and tourism | customer services | early years | economic development | education | emergency planning | environmental health | environmental cleanliness | events | highways | housing | homelessness | leisure services | libraries and museums | local tax collection | parks | passenger transport | planning | public health | regeneration | strategic transport | waste management | young carers | youth services

Much of our activity involves providing leadership and working with partners to deliver improvements to places and services. The County Durham Partnership and North East Combined Authority are two of the primary partnership structures for doing this.

In our leadership role as a single agency and in partnership with others, we create jobs, increase skills, reduce poverty, protect and repair our natural environment, give our children and young people the best start in life, improve health and wellbeing and help the vulnerable.

In this regard, the council plays an important role in shaping our communities and delivering better outcomes.

Appendix 2 lists many of the council's achievements from the last 12 months.

Over the last 12 months we have managed and maintained:

- 3,845 km of highways, 487 road bridges,
- 3,526 km of public rights of way
- More than 83,000 street lights
- 800,000 square feet of business space
- 45 hectares of woodland
- 148 allotment sites
- 15 family hubs
- 12 children's homes
- 266 state-run schools
- two crematoria, 46 cemeteries, 96 closed church yards
- Many parks, picnic areas, railway paths and nature reserves
- 14 leisure centres
- 39 libraries
- two theatres
- one museum and two town halls

Over the last 12 months we have supported:

- 1,200 children in care
- 16,000 adults with adult social care
- 5,000 children with social care and early help
- 15,000 children with additional education support
- 3,050 older people with residential or nursing care
- 6,400 with home care, telecare or day care
- 57,000 residents with council tax reduction
- 18,000 with new benefits claims
- 8,000 households with housing or homelessness
- 5,000 people to learn to swim

Local councillors and elections

Councillors are elected every four years. The next election will be in May 2025.

They play an important role in the running of the council. They work across the council and partner organisations to improve the quality of life for people in their communities and help to decide how local services are provided, funded and prioritised.

The council's cabinet provides an important place shaping leadership role. It is made up of the Leader of the Council and nine other councillors., Each councillor has their own portfolio, as listed below.

Cabinet members portfolios:

1. Finance
2. Children and Young People's Services
3. Adult and Health Services
4. Digital, Customer Services and Procurement
5. Resources, Investment and Assets
6. Economy and Partnerships
7. Equality and Inclusion
8. Rural Communities and Highways
9. Neighbourhoods and Climate Change

Cabinet discusses and makes decisions about the council's policies and strategies, as well as countywide decisions and issues, which affect more than one of the council's services. It keeps decision-making close to local people by holding meetings in communities across the county.

Councillors also lead the overview and scrutiny process. This involves developing comprehensive work programmes which reflect the issues which are important to our county and our communities. Scrutiny contributes to policy development and performance improvement through its review activity and plays an important part in holding the council to account for its performance in the delivery of services, shaping of places and both revenue and capital expenditure.

Councillors usually represent a political Party but can be Independent. All Councillors represent all the residents in their electoral division.

You can find out who your local councillor is and other information, such as surgery times and how to contact them, by using:

- the [Your Councillors](#) page
- the [Cabinet and the Leader of the Council](#) page
- [My Durham](#)
- [Our councillors' map](#)

Working together

We know that building a brighter future involves everybody – residents, visitors, businesses, other public sector organisations, the voluntary sector, councillors, council staff.

Working with others is central to our approach. And we believe that people who live, work study or visit our county should be involved in shaping improvements to places and services including how they are designed and delivered, the more they are involved the better the product. This is called co-production.



Diagram showing the ways people can be involved in making decisions or shaping services

Putting our communities at the heart of decision making will lead to better services for our residents and better outcomes for residents and places across the county.

Sometimes we will take a community leadership role to ensure local initiatives progress. Sometimes that role is taken on by another anchor organisation or partnership, and we will contribute as required.

We are changing the way we engage with the public and our local partners. In April 2025, a new Local Network (LN) model will replace the existing Area Action Partnership structure. The new model of twelve LNs will have a renewed focus on places, community development and enhancing the capacity of local communities and individuals to become more involved in community action to improve their area.

LNs will strengthen existing partnership working across our communities and places, by adopting a more strategic approach to delivery of better outcomes. Focused four-year local action plans will guide local priorities and investment going forward. These plans will identify opportunities for increased joined up working between LNs, partners, and other Durham County Council services. They will ensure that the LNs help to deliver the County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy whilst delivering improved community resilience to help us better manage demand for services.

There is a strong track record of working in partnership across County Durham, which is evident throughout our County Durham Partnership. The partnership is made up of leaders from key public, private and voluntary sector organisations who work together to drive a common purpose and ambition for the County to improve the quality of life for people within the County.

Supporting the County Durham Partnership are a number of Partnership Boards focusing on health, community safety, the economy, the environment and climate change and community empowerment. These partnerships have developed strategies based on evidence from Durham Insight, alongside, local expertise and the voice of our communities to develop joint priorities for action. Our Partnerships provide added value by focusing on the areas that

cannot be addressed by individual agencies alone with solutions delivered through a partnership response.

North East Combined Authority

The council is part of the [North East Combined Authority \(NECA\)](#) which was formed in May 2024. Led by an elected mayor, the NECA covers seven council areas. Its purpose is to unlock the powers and extra funding devolved from national government to champion the full potential of our region, the county and places within it.

We are the lead council for the culture, creative, tourism and sport portfolio which is consistent with our ambition to further develop our cultural offer and visitor economy.

The County Durham Partnership

The County Durham Partnership is made up of key public, private and voluntary sector organisations that work together to drive a common purpose and ambition for the county, and improve the quality of life for the people within County Durham. The Partnerships Board has representatives from the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, Durham County Council, Durham Constabulary, Durham University, County Durham Housing Forum, the Office of Police, Crime, and Victims' Commissioner and representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The partnerships aims to promote and develop County Durham by linking local plans and strategies with regional and national strategies; providing strategic co-ordination for the area to avoid duplication and maximise available resources; using the ambitions and priorities in the County Durham Vision 2035, ensure outcomes are delivered by driving action plans; and working with thematic groups to collectively shape and steer commissioning and delivery of local services.

Our approach to wellbeing

Wellbeing includes everything that is important to people and their lives.

Put simply, it is **'how we are doing' and 'how satisfied we are with our lives'**.

It affects, and is affected by, our relationships; health (mental and physical); what we do; where we live; personal finance; economy; education and skills; governance; and environment. These factors change over time for all of us, and sometimes we need help.

Alongside services offered by organisations like the council and the NHS, we can often find help within our communities; provided by local people, charities, and voluntary groups.

The [County Durham Approach to Wellbeing](#) is based on the best public health evidence for improving people's wellbeing through implementing community centred approaches. The approach to wellbeing is about putting people at the heart of everything we do and underpins our work to achieve the [County Durham Vision](#).

As a council, implementing the approach to wellbeing will mean that we make sure that:

- People can understand the information we provide whether that is digitally or on paper
- We understand and reduce the barriers people experience in accessing information and services
- We get better at listening to people in our communities and involve them as part of the solutions using their local knowledge and experience to help shape solutions
- We are more connected with communities by having two-way conversations and are open and honest about what people can and cannot have their say on or influence
- We begin to support people more holistically taking into account all of their needs and make every contact count
- We use evidence, good practice, learn together and share information
- We listen to and empower our workforce about where changes are needed to direct changes and support them to volunteer in our communities.
- We have a healthy and supported workforce.

Our values and behaviours (the way we work)

We want everyone to experience the highest standard of conduct from our employees. To help achieve this, we have developed a set of values and behaviours and placed them at the heart of everything we do.

These will help our employees do the right things in the right way.

Our values, being outcome focussed, people focussed, empowering and innovative are explained below and are supported by a set of behaviours that we expect all our employees to demonstrate whilst undertaking their duties.



We work together to achieve the best for people



We put people and communities at the heart of everything we do



We value, trust and support each other



We embrace change and look for better ways to deliver services

Our Plan

Our economy

We want to create a sustainable, inclusive economy with a diverse range of more and better jobs that meet all skills levels, with targeted training and learning programmes tailored to our employment specialisms and the needs of our businesses. We will deliver these new jobs, by developing our major employment sites and opportunity sectors, and developing our excellent tourism and cultural offer. We will give our children and young people the education and training they need to access these opportunities.

We have already delivered £150 million of capital investment while helping 1,000 businesses to thrive and another 140 new businesses start up. We have supported the most vulnerable through the Household Support Fund and low-cost surplus food hubs, as well as auto-enrolling 2,500 school children for free school meals, but we recognise there is still more to do.

To achieve economic growth, we need strong educational foundations from Early Years to post degree level. Therefore, we have a sharp focus on working across health and education settings to ensuring all children and young people achieve their full potential, and are equipped with the skills and knowledge required for the workplace.

We have a clear long-term vision for the county's economic future. We are using our place leadership role to work with others including national government, the County Durham Partnership, North East Combined Authority, businesses and other partners. Our Inclusive Economic Strategy is underpinned by short to medium-term delivery plans and a framework which guides and attracts investment that will deliver economic growth.

We want as many people as possible to contribute to and benefit from growth. We are supporting growth in all parts of the county by creating new business and job opportunities, and showing the potential of the county. We continue to help new and existing local businesses through a broad range of services, and access to business networks. We are helping people find jobs and advance their careers by improving their skills.

The county has strong economic foundations. We are supporting growth in sectors such as financial technologies, space technologies, and advanced materials. Our global university is expanding, and our visitor economy is growing. This is generating private investment, strengthening local business networks, and supporting opportunities in other parts of the economy.

Workforce health and connectivity are key challenges We continue to work with partners to overcome barriers to work, improve local transport systems and broadband networks, and develop a broad range of jobs and business premises across the county.

Our aim is to create more and better jobs across the county and its unique towns and villages. We will do this in an inclusive way, working in partnership to support growth and diversification, enhancing our villages, towns and tourist attractions, and reducing carbon emissions.

Our unique landmarks, landscapes, and history are strengths. We will harness the social and economic potential of our distinctive communities, cultural and heritage assets, and develop creative ways to drive growth. We will promote the county, turn challenges into opportunities, and maximise the county's potential to bridge the gaps with national levels of performance.

Why “Our Economy” is a theme of the plan:

- The local economy has shown strong signs of recovery following the Covid 19 Pandemic and Cost of Living crisis, however there are ongoing opportunities for the county.

- County Durham currently attracts more than 20 million visitors a year, generating £1.2 billion and supporting over 13,000 jobs. There is potential to build on this and grow our tourism industry.
- Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita across the county has increased at a faster rate than other parts of the country, but at £20,173 there is still more to do to bring it up to regional (£23,251) and national (£33,976) levels.
- Although unemployment rates across the county are falling and are relatively low (3.4%) compared to the national average (3.8%), economic inactivity is worse than the national average and we want to address this.
- 30.2% of children in our county are considered to be living in poverty, which although similar to national levels, is still too high.
- Whilst the take-up of free school meals is increasing and is encouraged, at 31.5% the rate of children eligible for them is an indicator of need locally.
- Fewer residents are educated to degree level or above, compared to the national average (26.7% compared to 33.9%).
- 4.8% of 16-to-17-year-olds need further support to get into education, employment or training.

Our priorities

- A range of employment sites
- A strong, competitive economy
- A broader experience for residents and visitors
- Young people accessing good quality education, training and employment
- Helping all people into rewarding work
- Fewer people affected by poverty and deprivation

To do this we will

- Work with educational settings where appropriate to raise educational attainment for all.
- Support children and young people facing disadvantage to achieve the highest possible levels of educational attainment.
- Support young people and adults to move into education, training, employment and self-employment, prioritising those with the greatest need.
- Maximise economic growth by attracting new businesses to the county and targeting key areas of opportunity including research and advanced manufacturing, green jobs, life sciences and satellite applications sectors.
- Attract additional businesses and jobs to strategic employment sites at Durham City Innovation District, Forrest Park, Jade Business Park, Integra 61, and the North East Technology Park (NETPark).
- Encourage individuals to start a business in the county, while supporting new and growing enterprises, innovative businesses, and improving levels of business productivity.

- Regenerate and improve the vibrancy of towns and villages.
- Develop the next phase of the 62 hectare Aykley Heads site to create a Durham Innovation District.
- Deliver strategic infrastructure including road, rail and broadband upgrades.
- Promote the county to visitors, businesses, and investors.
- Support the development of visitor infrastructure including accommodation, attractions and experiences that delivers a year-round tourism offer which will create jobs and opportunities for our residents.
- Support the local economy and promote fair trading through effective business regulation to prevent e-crime, fraud, scams, illegal money lending, counterfeit and illicit supplies of goods and other unfair trading practices.
- Ensure a healthy and sustainable food chain for the benefits of consumers, legitimate businesses and the rural economy.
- Provide business advice and guidance to businesses and event organisers to promote better business compliance and protect public health and safety.

Relevant documents

[Inclusive Economic Strategy](#)

[County Durham Plan](#)

[County Durham Investment Prospectus](#)

[Poverty Action Strategy](#)

Our environment

We want to protect and restore our natural environment, including biodiversity and healthy ecosystems. We declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed to reduce our carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and contribute towards a net zero county by 2045. We declared an ecological emergency in 2022 and committed to address ecological decline. Our county has significant landscape and ecological value and supports unique combinations of plant and animal species.

In the past year we have restored 247 hectares of woodland, improved recycling and introduced more electric vehicle charging points, whilst undertaking work to protect our natural environment through our nature recovery strategy and work with partners such as the National Trust and Durham Wildlife Trust.

We live in a beautiful county. Large areas are of national and international importance for their landscapes and wildlife. We have a National Landscape (a UNESCO designated Geopark), a Heritage Coast, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Although the county is host to many important and attractive landscapes, habitats and species, our natural environment is under threat from changes to land use, land use management, pollution and climate change.

The climate crisis is a global issue, but we can act locally as a single agency and in partnership with others, including work through the County Durham Partnership and North East Combined Authority.

As a single agency we have provided local leadership to improve the county and places within it by declaring both a climate emergency and an ecological emergency - pledging to become net zero by 2030 and to contribute to net zero county by 2045. We are also committed to stopping the decline of wildlife and habitats and be more resilient to extremes of weather.

We are reducing carbon emissions from our operations and have supported tree and hedgerow planting and peatland restoration across the county.

We are also working across our services and with partners to deliver actions that will both safeguard and improve the health and vitality of biodiversity within the county and on council owned green space and land. We are implementing a countywide Local Nature Recovery Strategy to improve habitat for nature and achieve wider environmental goals.

Why “Our Environment” is a theme of the plan:

- Carbon emissions have been greatly reduced in the county but there is still more to do. The council itself emits approximately 30,000 tonnes of CO² a year, but this only accounts for around 2% of the county's total emissions so we must work together to reach our target of a net zero county by 2045.
- Despite progress improving the infrastructure needed for electric vehicles, towards the end of 2023, only 0.22% of vehicle registrations in County Durham were for ultra-low emission vehicles compared to 3.8% for the rest of England.
- 33.1% of adults in the county walk or cycle for travel purposes at least once a week, but we want to increase this where possible.
- The Green Economy in County Durham accounts for 16% of the county's GDP and we want to further capitalise on these opportunities.

- Although 90% of waste is diverted from landfill locally, the county still generates over 250,000 tonnes of waste each year, of which 37% is recycled; we want to produce less waste, and recycle or reuse more of the waste that we do produce.
- With 6,000 fly-tip incidents recorded in the 12 months to June 2024 we need to deter this anti-social and damaging behaviour
- Although the county is rich in natural beauty, at 8.5%, woodland cover is below the national average of 13%. We must also reverse biodiversity loss and protect our natural environment.

Our priorities

- A physical environment contributing to good health
- A net zero and resilient county
- Reduced impact of waste and pollution on our environment
- A protected, restored and sustainable natural environment

To do this we will

- Make the county net zero by 2045 with increasing levels of nature recovery.
- Decarbonise the council's buildings and operations to make the council net zero by 2030.
- Continue to work with and encourage all residents and businesses to reduce, reuse, recycle, and adopt sustainable practices.
- Develop infrastructure to make cycling and walking viable modes of transportation and encourage residents to embrace it.
- Improve the air quality across County Durham and deliver the air quality action plan in Durham City.
- Manage, maintain and improve our network of footpaths, bridleways and by-ways, allowing more people to visit the outdoors to improve their health and wellbeing.
- Implement and deliver a countywide Local Nature Recovery Strategy which sets out our priorities for nature recovery and wider environmental goals.
- Tackle biodiversity loss and protect our natural environment.
- Work with key strategic partners to replace technologies using fossil fuels with electrically powered equivalents, such as electric vehicles and heat pumps.

Relevant documents

[Air Quality Action Plan](#)

[Climate Emergency Response Plan](#)

[Ecological Emergency Response Plan](#)

[Minerals and Waste DPD](#)

Our people

We want to help our residents live long and independent lives and remain in good health for as long as possible. We will protect and improve health by tackling the leading causes of illness and early death, inequalities and the challenges around mental health. We will ensure a sustainable high-quality care market and invest in a multi-million pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.

Through our Stronger Families Programme we have helped numerous families overcome problems such as challenging behaviour, parental conflict, health needs, substance and alcohol support, domestic abuse, unemployment, housing issues and school attendance issues. We have supported 150 people to secure employment in the care sector, which has helped reduce waiting times for adult care services, and our social care services for children and adults have both received good feedback from statutory inspections by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.

This is a complex area built upon systems which span public private and community and voluntary organisations. The Council is committed to providing effective leadership and partnership working to deliver better outcomes for people and places. For example, through the County Durham Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care System, integration of health and social care services and commissioning, care market shaping and investment in prevention services.

Children are a top priority for us. We will work to ensure they remain healthy and safe. Our commitment extends beyond providing support to children in crisis; we strive to create a nurturing environment where all children can grow, develop, and thrive. Through family-based care settings, tailored support services and education and skills, we aim to help every child reach their full potential.

Good health is important. But in some parts of our county, people spend less time in good health and die younger than in other parts of the country. Also, more people have long-term health issues. Much of this ill-health is due to the county's industrial past and inequalities across the county.

Ill-health increases demand for our services. We are joining-up our health and social care services and helping our older and disabled residents live independently in their own homes for longer with a focus on prevention and early intervention. We are also encouraging healthy choices and want to create a county which is smoke-free, has low levels of addiction, and where people are a healthy weight and have high levels of good mental health.

We recognise challenges within the care sector and are reviewing our approach to commissioning. This includes expanding extra care provision and only building new care homes where we identify there is a need. This will help ensure a sustainable and high-quality care market.

We will make it clear what help and support is available to our residents and how to get it.

Why “Our People” are a theme of the plan:

- Although well looked after through our corporate parenting responsibility, there are around 1,200 children in care in County Durham, which is amongst the highest rates in the country. This includes 76 unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- There are almost 12,000 pupils who receive Special Education Needs (SEN) support and more than 5,000 children have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Requests for new plans are increasing with more than 80 new requests each month and we must ensure all of these children and young people achieve the best possible start in life.

- Over 1,000 children are being electively home educated.
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) predicts that by 2043, one in four residents in the county will be aged 65 and over, this will put additional pressure onto adult social care provision that already receives almost 6,000 referrals each quarter.
- Only 52.6% of our residents aged 16 to 64 and who have a physical or mental long-term health condition are in employment, compared to 57.1% in the North East and 65.3% nationally.
- There are more than 52,000 unpaid carers across our county, with an increasing number of carers in poor health themselves
- Health outcomes vary across the county, so although the vast majority live long and healthy lives there are health inequalities that need addressing. For example, an estimated 16.5 per 1,000 adults across the county are dependent drinkers compared to a national average of 13.7 As a result, our alcohol specific hospital admissions and mortality rates are significantly higher than the England rate.

Our priorities

- Children and young people enjoying the best start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing, and a safe childhood
- Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes
- Promotion of positive behaviours (e.g. reducing smoking and alcohol consumption, promotion of healthy weight and mental health)
- Further integration of health and social care services
- Tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health and build resilient communities
- Support people to live independently for as long as possible in their own home - more homes for older and disabled people
- Support people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and protect adults with care and support needs from harm
- Protect and improve the health of the local population, tackling leading causes of illness and death

To do this we will

- Ensure a joined-up service for health and social care, improving health and wellbeing, with reduced inequality between people or communities.
- Help people live well for longer by making smoking history, enabling healthy weight for all, improving mental health and reducing alcohol harms.
- Ensure that all children and young people are protected and, if necessary, provided with safe and loving homes.
- Adopt the care experience as a protected characteristic.
- Deliver integrated family support through our family hubs and the Best Start in Life Programme.
- Improve access to welfare, advice and guidance to support residents whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Help people live independently for longer through preventative services, better use of technology and more homes for older and disabled people.

- Improve the care options available to people with a learning disability or mental health illness, and reduce high cost permanent care solutions.
- Ensure we have well-functioning care markets
- Improve lives by tackling anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder that impacts on our communities.

Relevant documents

[Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

Mental Health Strategy

[Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy](#)

[Growing up in County Durham Strategy](#)

Moving Together in County Durham

Our communities

We want our communities to be well connected and supportive of each other, with vibrant and accessible towns and villages which are well-used, clean, attractive and safe. We will ensure our residents shape the places they live and are involved in making the decisions that affect them. We will support our most vulnerable residents, particularly those isolated or financially vulnerable. We will maintain a strong focus on tackling poverty.

Through our developing Local Network model, we are strengthening the engagement and participation of local communities to help better shape our services. In the past year, local improvement programmes have received £3.8 million of funding through councillors' local area budgets, and we have improved local facilities plus ensured the safety of communities through Public Space Protection Orders and projects such as the Night Hub.

Our communities, with their distinct identity and heritage, are where people live, work, and raise families. In conjunction with the County Durham Partnership we want to make them better. The county is growing, and it is important that that growth is sustainable and of benefit to both urban and rural areas of the county.

As a council we take seriously our leadership role in supporting the development of strong vibrant and inclusive communities. Through our newly formed Community Networks we will reinvigorate how we work with our communities to shape places and services to meet their needs. We will support them to identify local priorities, develop plans and support community delivery. We will ensure locally identified needs are met.

We are continuing to invest in our town and village centres and place-based regeneration while respecting the landscape and natural assets. We want quality environments for people to live and visit. As more people move into the county, we need more homes. We also want private rental homes to be of a higher standard and more homes suitable for people who are older or disabled. Homes must be future-proofed so to remain suitable as their needs increase.

We are shaping vibrant places by helping to transform derelict and abandoned spaces into assets that enhance the overall attractiveness and liveability of our communities. We are doing this by bringing more vacant properties back into use and regulating private landlords to improve housing conditions.

We are encouraging people back into our town and village centres and growing local economies through events, leisure, and culture.

Through our Leisure Transformation Programme, we are delivering a mix of new building projects and refurbishments to existing buildings to improve our leisure facilities where it is financially viable to do so.

Our plans will also introduce new activities which reflect changing trends and support the economic recovery of the county.

We will also ensure all our communities have access to fast and reliable broadband. By improving digital connectivity, we will open up access to more and better paid jobs across the county, particularly in areas difficult to reach by public transport.

To achieve our ambitions, we will maintain our strong relationships with our communities and residents, and empower them to shape their future through meaningful engagement through the new Local Network model.

Why “Our Communities” are a theme of the plan:

- Although the county is a great place to live, work or visit, the “Community Needs Index” shows greater levels of community need across the three domains of civic assets, active and engaged communities plus connectedness.
- The crime rate in County Durham is 102.1 crimes per 100,000 population compared to a rate of 80.7 nationally.
- Although slightly more people own their own property compared to the national average, only 4.4% of houses in County Durham are classed as “affordable” compared to an average of 9.1% nationally.
- To meet growing housing demand, 210 empty houses were brought back into use, mainly through negotiations with owners and 1,291 additional dwellings were completed across the county during 2023/24, however still more houses are needed.
- Through our selective licensing scheme we are regulating landlords and managing agents of 29,000 privately rented properties in areas that suffer from low housing demand and/or high levels of anti-social behaviour and/or deprivation.
- There are almost 5 million passenger journeys on the county’s bus network every three months.

Our priorities

- Improve standards across housing stock
- Towns and villages which are vibrant, well-used, clean, attractive and safe
- Good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities
- Communities able to come together and support each other
- More high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs of our residents
- Enable rural communities to become sustainable whilst retaining their distinctiveness
- Continued to reduce the inequality gap between our communities

To do this we will

- Continue to develop place based working arrangements, co-producing, designing and implementing area based interventions to improve health, safety and wellbeing of the community, by building on our Area Action Partnerships and developing new local networks, supported by grant funding, to give our communities more say on local priorities.
- Develop neighbourhood interventions to tackle low level crime and anti-social behaviour, housing and environmental issues to create safer places, reduce crime and disorder and maintain community cohesion.
- Building resilience within communities against crime, disorder and impact from major incident.
- Work with partners to assess and improve the standards and quality of student accommodation and contribute to the development of a Student Wellbeing Strategy.
- Deliver a range of targeted interventions to improve quality of housing and living standards in the private sector particularly in areas of deprivation and health inequalities.
- Build more council houses.

- Reduce homelessness through targeted early intervention, making more homes available and improving access for our most vulnerable households.
- Continue our £62 million leisure transformation programme with a new leisure centre and library at Bishop Auckland.
- Deliver the Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns Fund Programme.
- Supply Seaham Garden Village development with geothermal heat from mine water treatment scheme.
- Work with our communities to encourage everyone to play a part in enhancing the local environment.
- Reduce environmental crime through improved intelligence, greater education and awareness, and tougher enforcement measures.
- Progress bus reform work to ensure that we get the right decision for County Durham and its residents.
- Continue investment in bus services tailored to our communities, with improved network coverage, greater frequencies and lower fares.
- Support greater digital inclusion through connectivity, hardware and skills.

Relevant documents

[Digital Durham Programme](#)

[Housing Strategy](#)

[North East Transport Plan](#)

[North East Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)

[Safe Durham Partnership Strategy](#)

Our council

We want to be an excellent council with effective governance arrangements, a good grip on our performance and finances, a workforce fit for the future making best use of the latest technology to provide an effective service and that listens to the views of our residents and service users.

The work of the council in the past year has been recognised through national workforce awards and statutory inspections. The authority became a Fostering Friendly Employer and was awarded green status by Investors in the Environment. We have improved the ways customers can contact us and maintained high satisfaction levels for the services we deliver.

We are a well-functioning council. This means we meet the standards set by the government (Best Value Standards). This includes always looking for better ways to do things, finances in line with ambitions, service delivery that is both low-cost and high-value, and checks and balances that make sure everybody follows the rules. We have a [productivity plan](#) that sets out how we will improve and reduce unnecessary spending.

We are open to challenge and support from other councils (peer review) and external organisations such as CIPFA, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. We regularly compare our performance to other councils.

We are also resident focused. We actively listen to their views and place their interests at the heart of everything we do. Our new 'Let's Talk' consultation portal will bring our participation, engagement and consultation processes into one place, and allow us to engage with more people.

Our staff are our most important asset and we want to be an employer of choice attracting highly skilled motivated people who want to work with us. After the NHS, we are the largest employer in the county and one of the largest providers of training and apprenticeship opportunities in the county. We plan to attract and keep our staff through a range of staff benefits, modern-day working practices, training opportunities and career pathways which give everybody the chance to progress.

With increasing trends for remote working and automation, and more residents expecting digital services available 24/7, we have needed to rethink the way in which many of our services are delivered, the culture of our organisation and the skills we need for the future. We need to harness the opportunities technology is providing to transform our services, including the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence, whilst ensuring these services remain accessible to all.

Improving the digital accessibility of our services is crucial in building a highly regarded council. Through continuous improvement and responsive service delivery we aim to exceed customer expectations and guarantee a service that is of the highest quality.

Financial responsibility is our top priority. Our dedicated focus on effective resource allocation, financial sustainability, and delivering value to our community sets us apart.

We closely monitor performance and value for money, and achieve the targets outlined in our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), demonstrating our commitment to responsible financial management.

Through efficient revenue management, we can maximise financial resources, maintain fiscal stability, and deliver the services and infrastructure our community relies on.

Why “Our Council” is a theme of the plan:

- Increasing demand for our services combined with limited financial resources means we must deliver services as efficiently and effectively as we can.

- To do this we must recruit and retain the best staff; employee turnover is currently 8.3% per year with 328 voluntary resignations in the 12 months to June 2024. 48% of those leavers had less than 2 years' service.
- Our councillors represent 532,200 people in 234,800 households; therefore our internal processes and procedures must remain customer focussed.
- In 2023/24, we spent just over £828 million, we must ensure we achieve the best possible value for money and where possible spend locally.
- Each year, we must respond in a timely manner to approximately half a million telephone calls, 360,000 on-line contacts and 80,000 face to face contacts
- More than 530 of our employees are enrolled in the apprenticeship programme to further develop the knowledge, skills and experience required of their role.

Our priorities

- Effectively managed resources
- A workforce fit for the future
- Services co-produced with service users
- Use data and technology more effectively
- A healthy workforce

To do this we will

- Balance our budget.
- Provide high quality, value for money services, using data and facts to make decisions.
- Use technology to make our services both effective and efficient.
- Maximise the benefits of the data we hold to help us drive better services and value for money.
- Develop a healthy workforce that can meet future challenges.
- Promote social value in procurement to maximise the County Durham Pound.
- Ensure the council is an “employer of choice” in order to recruit and retain the best staff.

Relevant documents

[Workforce Strategy](#)

[Apprenticeship Strategy](#)

[Digital Strategy](#)

[Medium Term Financial Plan](#)

[Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement](#)

[Risk Management Strategy](#)

[Constitution of the Council](#)

Our finances

Finances

The council has been required to achieve significant savings over the last 16 years due to government funding reductions and budget pressures. The need for savings will continue in future years as inflationary and demand pressures outstrip our ability to raise council tax and due to expected restrictions in government funding uplifts.

For a number of years local government has received one year financial settlements which complicates effective long-term financial planning and there remains uncertainty around a likely implementation date of the Fair Funding Review.

Council tax

Council Tax is based upon historic property values. All properties are placed in one of eight valuation bands, determined by market value as at 1 April 1991. The proportion of properties in each band varies significantly across the country, impacting upon the tax raising capacity of individual local authorities. Across England, 65% of properties fall within bands A to C, but across County Durham it is around 83%.

This means County Durham has a much lower tax base than the national average and is therefore unable to generate as much council tax as those local authorities. This means a 1% increase in council tax would raise an additional £2.65 million across County Durham but a 1% increase in more affluent areas with high tax bases would raise in excess of £10 million.

Government funding

The council is facing increasing demand and significant cost pressures and will continue to face difficult decisions on spending and service provision.

The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) includes agreed savings of £5.9 million. However, we anticipate that further savings of £50.2 million will be required by 2027/28 to balance the books.

To be updated December/January

2024/25 Net Cost of Services

- Adult and Health Services £160.1m
- Chief Executive £4.6m
- Children and Young People's Services £189.2m
- Neighbourhoods and Climate Change £122.3m
- Regeneration and Economic Growth £54.9m
- Resources £25.7m
- Other £20.1m

2024/25 Financing of Revenue Expenditure

- Specific Govt Grants (exc. Housing Benefit and DSG) £158.8m
- Government Grant £220.5m
- Other Grants £105.9m
- Sales, fees and charges £135.9m
- Rents £10.9m
- Recharges £313.8m
- Other Income £17.7m
- Council Tax £283.6m
- Business rates £59.9

2024/25 Government Grants Budget by Service

- Adult and Health Services £112.2m
- Children and Young People's Services £33.1m
- Neighbourhoods and Climate Change £4m
- Regeneration and Economic Growth £9.5m
- Resources £115m

2024/25 Service, Fees and Charges Budget by Service

- Adult and Health Services £52.7m
- Chief Executive £0.5m
- Children and Young People's Services £20.2m
- Neighbourhoods and Climate Change £16.1m
- Regeneration and Economic Growth £33.5m
- Resources £8.4m

The council spends the majority of the budget in caring for vulnerable adults and children. Revenue expenditure covers all day-to-day expenses incurred by the council to provide services.

Relevant documents

Revenue Programme

To be updated December/January

Capital spending

The council has a significant capital budget of £681 million for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27.

This budget is utilised in investing in long term assets which includes highways, schools, leisure centres, libraries etc. The investment normally covers purchase, improvement and repair in areas such as property, buildings or equipment.

- Regeneration, Economy and Growth £402m
- Children and Young People's Services £139m
- Neighbourhoods and Climate Change £125m
- Resources £12m
- Adults and Health Services £3m

Relevant documents

Capital Programme

Equality and inclusion

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of our vision and core values and we are committed to promoting equality and diversity, as an employer, in the services we deliver, in partnership and in the decisions we make. We must ensure that the transition to a net zero economy is fair and just and that no communities are left behind.

We will improve employment opportunities for disabled people

As a [Disability Confident Leader](#), we will continue to improve recruitment and retention rates of disabled people within the council. The Disability Staff Network underpins our approach to inclusion and has ambitious plans including the implementation of a buddy system to provide tailored support for any employee with a disability who needs this. Our employability programmes, such as [DurhamEnable](#), work with jobseekers and local employers, to break down the barriers to paid work faced by people with disabilities, neurodiversities, and long-term health conditions and this further supports our leadership status.

We will build inclusive communities

We will work with our communities to support their development and give them more control over the factors and decisions which affect their lives. As our communities have differing needs, strengths and potential, and we recognise one size does not fit all, we will target support towards those most in need and help to build capacity and resilience.

By working more effectively with other organisations and interested parties such as parents / carers and service users, to collectively shape services and initiatives that matter, means we are doing things with communities rather than to them.

We will build an inclusive and welcoming employee culture

We are committed to creating and sustaining a modern and supporting working environment for our employees and tackling inequalities, prejudice and discrimination. We aim to be an inclusive organisation, with improved staff engagement and effective staff networks.

Relevant documents

[Equality Policy](#)

How we developed our plan

This plan was developed during 2024/25 (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025).

It involved asking people what they thought of our current plan, what they think we are doing right and how we can improve. This included people who live in the county, people who work for us, people and organisations who deliver our services (or help deliver them), local businesses, elected councillors, community groups, and County Durham Association of Local Councils.

We also looked at a range of evidence including:

The current and future needs of our communities.	<p>Our communities are unique. With different needs and potential, they differ from each other, and others both nationally and regionally.</p> <p>We have lots of information on our online platform Durham Insight our Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment (JSNAA) describes the current and future health and wellbeing needs of our residents.</p>
Data from official data providers.	Such as the Office for National Statistics which is responsible for collecting information about the economy, population and society at national, regional and local levels.
Information from our communities.	Such as their opinion of work we plan to carry out or work we have completed. Whether we are meeting their needs, and whether they are satisfied with the level and quality of the services provided.
Progress against existing council priorities and other work areas.	Learning from what has been achieved, what has changed as a result, and what more is needed to move forward.
Compliance with relevant standards.	A number of statutory and non-statutory organisations, such as Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and the Local government Association all help local authorities continually improve their performance. Self-evaluation against recognised standards and feedback from inspections, be they statutory or peer support, all help identify areas for improvement.
Best Value Standards.	We have referred to the statutory guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure the plan meets the criteria needed to be a well-functioning council in relation to planning and continuous improvements.

We want to provide high standards of service in all we do. By listening to our customers and taking action we can improve our services and meet customer needs.

Have your say

[Send us a compliment or make a suggestion](#)

[Make a complaint](#)

[Respond to consultations](#)

[Ask a question at council meetings](#)

How we measure our success

The council uses and publishes a wide range of performance information to monitor progress against the ambitions and priorities set out in this plan.

This data includes a range of primary indicators (headline measures that we use to monitor progress towards our objectives) which are supported by more detailed secondary indicators. Our indicator set includes those used by the Office for Local Government (Oflog) to monitor and support local authorities. The lists in Appendix 1 show the main performance information used to measure progress against this plan, however the list is not exhaustive and other data items may be used as required to identify issues and monitor progress.

During 2025/26, we will set targets for the primary indicators based on local and national performance. This will help us drive continuous improvement and the deliver well performing services.

Performance is reported and shared publicly through the quarterly Corporate Performance Report, the latest version of which can be found at the link below. This report includes performance data from other councils where available, so our performance can be compared to regional and national figures.

Other data that gives an indication of the situation in the county, but isn't really a reflection of the performance of the council alone, such as employment figures, value of gross value added (the value of goods and services produced across the county) and average house prices, will also be used to identify and prioritise further work.

Furthermore, information from statutory inspections, such as those undertaken by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted, plus the findings of our external auditors and peer inspections also provides useful feedback as to how the council is performing. This process provides assurance by clearly identifying further actions that need to be taken by the authority to continuously improve performance and how we operate.

Major projects and initiatives, for example those with large capital spend or significant community impact are overseen by dedicated internal boards and assurance processes. Key decisions are approved by Cabinet and progress monitored and reported accordingly.

Relevant Documents:

[Corporate Performance Reports](#)

Appendix 1: Our measures of success

Our economy

Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning applications determined on time (Oflog) • Planning applications overturned on appeal (Oflog) • New businesses supported by the council • Jobs created or safeguarded • Government funded childcare • Children meeting expected standards in maths and reading at Key Stage 2 • Percentage achieving GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5 • Disadvantaged cohorts meeting basic threshold measures in English and Maths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inward investments secured • Investment secured for companies • Occupancy of Business Durham floor space • Businesses engaged by Business Durham • Businesses supported by regeneration projects • Employability programmes attendance and outcomes • People attending cultural festivals events run and commissioned by Culture, Sport and Tourism • People attending council owned cultural venues • Average occupancy and yield at Gala Durham, Empire Cossett and Bishop Auckland Town Hall of (a) cinema screenings, and (b) theatre performances • Council owned/managed heritage assets 'at risk' • People attending libraries • Library borrowers
Wider Indicators of Success	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of jobs • Number of businesses • GVA per filled job • Young people in education, employment and training • Employment rate • Residents with higher level skills • 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment land approved and delivered • Visitors to the county • Money generated and jobs supported by the visitor economy • Visitor attractions served by public transport • Tourism businesses actively engaged with Visit County Durham

Our environment

Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household waste re-used, recycled or composted (Oflog) • Waste diverted from landfill • Residual household waste (kg per household) (Oflog) • Contamination rate (all household waste) (Oflog) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with cycle routes & facilities • Council electric vehicle charge points publicly accessible • Nitrogen dioxide levels within Durham City Air Quality Management Area

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's carbon emissions 	
Wider Indicators of Success	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Durham to become net zero by 2045 • Cycling and walking levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park and Ride passenger journeys • Woodland Creation

Our people

Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early help cases open • Children's social care referral rate • Children's social care re-referrals • Children's social care assessments completed on time • Children in need rate • Child protection plan rate • Children looked after rate • Care leavers aged 16-24 • Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as a percentage of all children in care • Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development • Pupils attending a school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted • Children who are electively home educated • Education Health and Care Plans completed on time • Referrals into adult social care • Care Act assessments completed • Residential social care providers rated good or outstanding by the Care Quality Commission. • Quality of life of a) social care users, and b) carers (Oflog) • Adult social care requests resulting in a service (Oflog) • Outcome of short-term services (Oflog) • Turnover rate – adult social care (Oflog) • Ease of finding information for adult social care (Oflog) • Care Connect customers • Households prevented from homelessness. • Households where homelessness has been relieved. • Households where there has been an acceptance of the main homeless duty • People living in temporary accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social worker vacancies • Children in care in a family setting • Families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes • Eligibility for, and take-up of, free school meals • Children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan • Pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan attending a mainstream school • Pupils receiving Special Education Needs support • Adult social care service users assessed or reviewed in the last 12 months • Satisfaction of carers with adult social care services • Adults aged 65+ admitted on a permanent basis to residential or nursing care • Family Hub registration • Service users receiving (a) home care, (b) telecare, (c) day care and d) direct payments • Care Connect calls and response rates • Potential clients contacted within 3 weeks of initial referral for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) • Successful move-ons from council managed support accommodation • Smoking quitters at four weeks. • Successful completions – alcohol • Visits to Leisure Centres • THRIVE memberships • MOVE memberships • Participation and completion in Wellbeing for Life programmes.

Wider Indicators of Success

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approvals on new housing sites meeting (a) accessible and adaptable standards (b) a design and type for older persons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers smoking at time of delivery • People accessing stop smoking service |
|---|--|

Our communities

Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads where maintenance is recommended • 'Footways' structurally unsound • Bridge condition • Highway defects repaired Satisfaction with highways maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty homes brought back into use • Selective Licence Scheme outcomes • Chapter Homes properties sold • Acceptable levels of cleanliness • Harbour Service (Domestic Abuse) outcomes • Children and young people reviewed as at risk to Child Sexual Exploitation • Anti-social behaviour rate • Service satisfaction of victims and complainants of anti-social behaviour • Anti-social behaviour case review referrals and appeals

Wider Indicators of Success

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties with access to gigabit-capable broadband • Net affordable homes • Net additional dwellings • Fly-tipping rate • Town centre vacancy rate • Satisfaction with ease of access • Satisfaction with bus operators • Households using public transport which can access (a) key service locations (b) employment sites • bus services on time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local passenger journeys on public transport • Road Traffic Collisions and fatalities • Rate of domestic abuse incidents reported to the Police |
|---|---|

Our council

Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tax collected (Oflog) • Business rates collected (Oflog) • Time to process claims and changes of circumstances for (a) housing benefit, (b) council tax reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of accounts • Non-ringfenced reserves • Discretionary Housing Payment spend • Invoices paid within 30 days • Customer contact that is digital • Telephone calls answered within 3 minutes • service requests meeting performance standard • Complaints received and upheld • Data breaches • Top 5% of earners - female

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees aged 50 years or over • Employee turnover • Performance Development Reviews completed • Managers' training programme – completion rate • Employees on apprenticeship programme • Apprentice levy utilised • Apprentice retention rate • Sickness Rate • Employee accidents Work-related ill-health
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Wider Indicators of Success

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core spending power per dwelling (Oflog) • Band D council tax rate (Oflog) • Council tax revenue per dwelling (Oflog) • Social care spend as a % of core spending power (Oflog) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt servicing as % of core spending power (Oflog) • Total debt as % of core spending power (Oflog)
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Appendix 2: Our achievements

Our economy

- Delivered more than £150 million of capital investment.
- Doubled the size of NETPark, one of the UK's leading science parks, with a £62 million investment. A further £36 million investment is to follow.
- Helped 1,000 businesses survive, grow and succeed.
- Enabled 140 new start-up businesses to develop.
- Invested £7 million in our communities through the Towns and Villages Programme.
- Provided more than 3,500 residents with the skills to obtain good jobs and careers. .
- Opened The Story, a new state of the art cultural venue that is a gateway to the history of our county and its people, and home to the County Register Office.
- Delivered projects to reduce poverty using £1 million of UK Shared Prosperity Funding.
- Supported vulnerable / disadvantaged households using the Household Support fund (funded by central government) - £40 million spent since 2021. And provided ongoing financial support through Discretionary Housing Payments, Welfare Assistance, and engagement through the Advice in County Durham Partnership.
- Increased our low cost surplus food hubs (The Bread Butter Thing) to 20.
- Auto-enrolled 2,500 primary and secondary school children for free school meals.
- Extended Pension Credit, and therefore the Winter Fuel Allowance, to more than 2,000 pensioners
- Created more spaces at Sniperley Park and Ride, and expanded the service from Belmont and Sniperley.
- Delivered the Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone and the Future High Street Fund using major government investment.
- Improved the layout of roads at a number of key sites.
- Improved the visitor experience at Locomotion in Shildon.
- Supported more young people with an Education Health and Care Plan to move into education, employment and training through DurhamWorks and / or DurhamEnable.
- Supported young people in Year 11 identified as least likely to move into education, employment or training to progress into post-16 education, employment or training through the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools.
- Introduced more paid work experience placements across the council for 'care-experienced' young people and more Supported Internships across the county for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Driven by DurhamWorks, DurhamLearn and DurhamEnable.
- Introduced network-wide bus tickets, capped bus fares and free bus travel for eligible care leavers. Launched Link2work to help people who work shifts get to work.

- Reduced the burden of regulation on local businesses and improved business compliance through 'Better Business for All' advice and support.

Our environment

- Restored and reconnected 247 hectares of woodland through the three-year woodland revival project.
- Rolled out additional recycling points for a range of new materials including small electrical appliances, coffee pods, medical equipment and vapes.
- Improved the contamination rate of recycling collected from the kerbside through dedicated campaigning seeking behaviour change.
- Installed the first net zero asphalt road surface in Durham City using technology and specialist aggregates developed in the county.
- Trialled 'NightTune' nature friendly street lighting and solar powered street lighting in remote areas.
- Created a 19 kilometre walking and cycling route alongside the Stockton and Darlington Railway.
- Upgraded the council's estate and operations to increase energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. The council received over £4 million of government decarbonisation grant to bring improvements to the public estate.
- Improved public rights of way including routes at Hardwick Park, the Dene to Medomsley, Bearpark to Brandon and across the Durham City Green Corridor.
- Secured over £4.3 million to deliver 250 additional electric vehicle charge points across the county, adding to more than 150 charge points already delivered.
- Taken on Responsible Authority status for County Durham's statutory local nature recovery strategy. Governance and partnership arrangements are in place and early consultation complete, plan to publish the final strategy in 2025.
- Piloted new infrastructure to allow householders who do not have off-street parking to charge electric vehicles at home.
- Established a network of repair cafés across the county to help repair and reuse electrical and other items to reduce waste.
- Initiated a £1 million project with the National Trust and Durham Wildlife Trust to create and restore the wildflower-rich Magnesian Limestone grasslands along the county's coastline from Noses Point to Horden.
- Worked in partnership with the National Trust to help develop the Durham City Green Corridor landscape project following the line of the River Wear between Crook Hall and Finchale.
- Brought to a successful close the three year 'Seascapes' initiative, working in collaboration to help reveal and manage the natural, built and cultural heritage of our unique coast.
- Peatland restoration in the North Pennines National Landscape continues to deliver landscape and climate benefits.

- Supported volunteering opportunities across our environment through our countryside estate, It's Your Neighbourhood and Big Spring Clean.

Our people

- Adult social care services were rated as 'good' by the Care Quality Commission.
- Shorter waiting times across adult care services and more service users receiving timely reviews.
- Supported more than 150 people into employment in the care sector through our Care Academy.
- Transformed our mental health service and helped more people with additional social care needs. Provided local communities with £140,000 of funding for targeted mental health and wellbeing support.
- Introduced a new breakthrough service helping vulnerable adults with hoarding and self-neglect behaviours.
- Received positive feedback from Ofsted's inspection of the local area partnership for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services which found many key strengths and effective practices.
- Opened two new children's home plus an edge of care home to help prevent young people going into care.
- Helped families overcome problems such as challenging behaviour, parental conflict, health needs, substance and alcohol support, domestic abuse, unemployment, housing issues and school attendance issues through our [Stronger Families Programme](#).

Our communities

- Strengthened engagement and participation through a new Local Network model with greater focus on the impact of local investment funding.
- Invested £3.8 million of local area and councillors' budgets on local improvement programmes.
- Refurbished leisure centres at Peterlee, Spennymoor, Teesdale and Stanley to reduce carbon emissions and improve the customer experience.
- Expanded gigabit-capable broadband. across the county through the Digital Durham Programme.
- Co-funded the countywide network of welcome spaces which help combat poverty, isolation and loneliness within our communities.
- Acquired 144 properties to help families and individuals who have lost their homes .
- Installed Changing Places toilets at Locomotion, Raby Castle, Teesdale Leisure Centre, Hardwick Park and the Dunes Café at Crimdon.
- Delivered our annual events programme including Brass, Durham Book Festival, our food festivals, Pride, Holocaust Memorial Day and International Women's Day.

- Closed retail premises involved in the illicit supply of alcohol and tobacco (including vapes).
- Introduced a Public Space Protection Order in Durham City to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Received national recognition, as part of the Horden Together Partnership, from the Local Government Association for effective community engagement, and a Commendation from the Municipal Journal for its approach to reducing health inequalities.
- Delivered the Night Hub, which promotes the Safety of Women and Girls at Night (SWAN) and provides a safe refuge, guardianship and support service for everybody.

Our council

- Became a Fostering Friendly Employer.
- Won the 'Back Office Heroes' award at the LGC Workforce Awards for our 'Grow your Own' Apprenticeship programme.
- Short-listed at the LGC Workforce Awards for the 'Best Next Generation Employer' and 'Workforce Innovator'.
- Reduced vacancies across children's social work by improving recruitment, retention and resilience arrangements.
- Provided more lower cost, accessible options for customers to contact us. Maintained high satisfaction levels for service delivery.
- Extended our County Durham Pound Project, which maximises social value through our tendering processes, to the private and third sector organisations.
- Encouraged more local organisations to join the National Databank network which provides free SIM cards to help people access the internet.
- Increased the membership of our staff networks - more than 500 employees are involved in the disability, LGBT+, menopause, race, carers and armed forces networks.
- Awarded Green status, the highest level of accreditation, by the independent Investors in the Environment.
- Opened the first Low Carbon Depot at Morrison Busty, Annfield Plain. The entire depot now runs entirely off gas and powered by an on-site solar farm.
- Over 2,700 computers used by the council have been recycled, with 400 being used by local schools.