

Durham County Council

Council Plan 2014-17

Foreword

This Council Plan sets out what Durham County Council aims to achieve for the people of County Durham over the next three years. Local elections were held in May last year where all 126 seats on the Council were contested. I would like to welcome both new and returning Members to the Council. Our vision is to build an Altogether Better Durham, which is better for local people and provides better places to live and work. We share this vision with other public, private and voluntary sector partners in the county. This plan sets out the council's approach to delivering on its part in this vision.

The council has a clear focus on economic growth and this is recognised as a priority within our plans. 2013 saw us celebrate all that is unique and great about our county in our Year of Culture where we supported a range of arts, cultural and sporting events which helped boost the local visitor economy. During the year we also progressed a growth orientated local plan to one of the most advanced stages in the country. This will shape the future of the county for the next 20 years, helping to develop a thriving economy and promote business, building on successes such as Hitachi Rail UK, Durham Gate, Freeman's Reach and NETPark. We have also sought to work collaboratively with six other local authorities on shared priorities such as the economy, transport and skills and have submitted proposals to the Government to establish a combined authority for the North East.

The progress the council has made and the successes we have achieved are all the more impressive considering that they have been delivered during a challenging period of austerity. Grant funding reductions to the council have meant that we have had to take some difficult decisions about the services that we provide. Our spending reductions have been well managed and have been informed by extensive consultation with our residents. We work closely with our communities and have involved them in making decisions on a range of other issues such as participatory budget funding on local projects and our community buildings programme.

The Government's reductions in public sector spending have not just affected the council. Welfare reforms have resulted in significant cuts in the benefits budget. This has impacted harder in Durham than in other parts of the country. We have delivered a package of measures to help ease the burden including the introduction of a local council tax support scheme to protect those on benefits from national funding reductions in council tax benefit. We have also worked closely with housing providers and the voluntary and community sector to develop welfare assistance policies to help those who are most in need.

Our agenda over the lifetime of this plan is to ensure that local services are effectively managed over a period of significant change. We have already made some notable achievements during difficult times. We face a future that is not without its challenges but I believe that we have the right skills and attitude to overcome these and succeed in our vision to make Durham better for local people and provide better places to live and work

Simon Henig, Leader of the Council

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The Council and the Community

County Durham

County Durham is a place of distinctive character with a strong sense of its own identity. It has a proud and unique history having been settled since ancient times by the Romans, Angles, Saxons and Normans. The city of Durham developed as a centre of Christian worship in the 11th century with the completion of the cathedral which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Bishops of Durham were granted both spiritual and secular powers by William I effectively giving them the status of Kings of the North East, a situation which lasted until the Reformation. Later, County Durham became a centre for the industrial revolution providing the country and developing empire with coal, steel and ships. The area also saw the development of the world's first passenger steam railway in 1825.

Today, Durham is a county of economic, cultural and environmental contrasts. It stretches from the remote rural North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the West to the more densely populated East Durham Heritage Coast. The county covers an area of 223,260 hectares with 223,800 households and 12 major centres of population.

Following local government reorganisation in 2009, Durham County Council, with 514,300 residents¹, is the largest council in the North East region and the sixth largest all-purpose council by population in England.

The economic history of the county has generated a spatially fragmented geography of around 300 settlements including rural villages, small and medium-sized towns and a historic city with World Heritage status.

In common with the rest of the UK, the county's population is ageing with the average age of 41.3 years in 2011 rising to 42.1 years in 2021. Increases in life expectancy and the transition of the 'baby boom' generation from economic activity into retirement means that our older people cohort (aged 65+) is predicted to rise by 25.1% by 2021. Even greater increases are expected in the population of people aged 85 and over which is predicted to rise by 41.9% (nearly 4,600 people). An increase in the birth rate both nationally and locally will stem the decline in the number of people aged under 25, which is expected to remain fairly constant over the next two decades at its current level of approximately 29% of the population².

Black and minority ethnic communities make up 1.8% of the population³. County Durham is ranked as the 62nd most deprived out of 326 authorities nationally. There is a high proportion (45.4%) of the County Durham population living in the 30% most deprived areas⁴. Within these communities, weekly wages and rates of car ownership are low; the health of the population is relatively poor; life expectancy is below the average for the country and there are high levels of disability and long term illness.

¹ Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2011 and Mid-2012, Office for National Statistics, 2013

² County Durham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2013, Durham County Council and County Durham and Darlington NHS

³ Census 2011, Office for National Statistics

⁴ English Indices of Deprivation 2010, Department of Communities and Local Government.

In September 2013, 13,110 people were claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), which equates to 4.0% of the working age population. This is lower than the regional average of 4.7% but higher than the Great Britain average of 3.2%. In February 2013, 50,660 people were claiming out of work benefits⁵, which equates to 15.3% of the working age population and is a fall from 16% of the working age population in February 2012. The county figure is lower than the regional average of 15.5% but higher than the Great Britain average of 11.7%⁶. The history of heavy industry has left the region with a legacy of greater sickness and disability and dependency on benefit payments. The estimated financial loss in the county per working age adult due to welfare reform is the equivalent of £565 a year compared to £320 in the South East and £470 across Great Britain as a whole⁷.

Durham County Council

Durham County Council was established along with other county councils in England and Wales in 1888. The latest reorganisation of local government in Durham in 2009 saw the abolition of the seven district and borough councils in the county and the creation of Durham County Council as a new single all-purpose authority providing the full range of local government services to the public.

Countywide elections took place on 2nd May 2013 when all 126 seats on Durham County Council were contested. This was the first county council election to be held since Local Government Reorganisation in 2009. The council is made up of 126 Members representing 63 electoral divisions, each represented by either one, two or three members. The Labour Party has a controlling majority. The political makeup of the council is as follows:

Labour	94 Councillors
Independent	19 Councillors
Liberal Democrat	9 Councillors
Conservative	4 Councillors

The council operates a leader and cabinet style model of political governance and the cabinet is made up of ten councillors with the following portfolios:

Councillor	Portfolio
Councillor Simon Henig	Leader of the Council
Councillor Alan Napier	Deputy Leader and Finance
Councillor Morris Nicholls	Adult Services
Councillor Ossie Johnson	Children and Young People's Services
Councillor Jane Brown	Corporate Services
Councillor Neil Foster	Economic Regeneration
Councillor Eddie Tomlinson	Housing and Rural Issues
Councillor Maria Plews	Leisure, Libraries and Lifelong Learning
Councillor Brian Stephens	Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships
Councillor Lucy Hovvels	Safer and Healthier Communities

⁵ Department for Works and Pensions (DWP)'s 'out of work benefits' statistical group includes people claiming JSA, Incapacity Benefit, Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) and 'other' income related benefit claimants. In addition, one-parents are also included in this group.

⁶ NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics, February 2013.

⁷ Hitting the poorest places hardest: The local and regional impact of welfare reform, Sheffield Hallam University, 2013.

The council's overview and scrutiny function is made up of six scrutiny committees with an Overview and Scrutiny Management Board providing an oversight of the work of these committees which is made up of 26 councillors and ten other representatives.

Our council is broadly comparable with a major company in size. We provide a large range of services that include: teaching our young people and caring for our older people; lending the latest best sellers and protecting 900 year old documents; fixing road bridges and creating bridges in our communities; helping children to swim and helping adults to work; planting trees in nature reserves and recycling paper from our homes. In fact, any local service you can think of, Durham County Council will probably have a hand in it somewhere. We have a budget of £1.326 billion⁸, we employ over 7,826 people and our services are delivered to a customer base of over half a million people. To help us manage this undertaking, we employ a Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive and four Directors who make up the Corporate Management Team of the council. Each of the four Directors heads up a large service grouping as follows:

Chief Executive	George Garlick	Head of Paid Service
Assistant Chief Executive	Lorraine O'Donnell	Corporate policy, communications, corporate planning and performance, partnerships and community engagement, overview and scrutiny, civil contingencies, emergency planning, County Record Office.
Corporate Director, Resources	Don McLure	Finance, procurement, legal and democratic services (inc. electoral and registration services), human resources and organisational development, information and communications technology, internal audit, risk, insurance and corporate fraud, welfare rights (inc. management of the Citizens' Advice Bureau contract) and revenues and benefits (inc. creditors and debtors)
Corporate Director, Children and Adult Services	Rachael Shimmin	Adults' and children's social care and safeguarding, commissioning, public health, adult learning, fostering and adoption, looked after children, education development services, school admissions, attendance and exclusions, school transport, youth offending service, community safety, early intervention and partnership services.
Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services	Terry Collins	Waste management, parks, customer services, grounds maintenance, street cleaning, civic pride and enforcement, neighbourhood wardens, bereavement services, facilities management, housing maintenance, fleet, environmental health, trading standards, licensing, markets, sport and leisure, countryside management, museums and galleries, cinema and theatres,

⁸ £1,326,033,000 gross expenditure budget for 2013/14, Statement of Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2014

libraries, street lighting, coastal protection, road safety, highways, winter maintenance, building design.

Corporate Director,
Regeneration and
Economic Development

Ian Thompson

Physical and economic regeneration, transport, asset management, spatial policy and planning, support for business, tourism, strategic housing, landlord and tenant services, housing solutions, environment and design services, Care Connect, strategy programmes and performance support.

The Council's Vision

The council has a vision and priorities which are shared together with partners and which are based on consultation with local people and Area Action Partnerships. This vision developed by the council reflects the views and aspirations of the community and opportunities for improvement. It focuses around an altogether better Durham and comprises two components; to have an altogether better place which is altogether better for people.

This vision provides a framework which guides all of our detailed plans and programmes which will turn our vision into a reality. This is achieved through organising our improvement actions into a structure comprised of five priority themes:

Altogether Wealthier – focusing on creating a vibrant economy and putting regeneration and economic development at the heart of all our plans;

Altogether Better for Children and Young People – ensure children and young people are kept safe from harm and that they can 'believe, achieve and succeed';

Altogether Healthier – improving health and wellbeing;

Altogether Safer – creating a safer and more cohesive county;

Altogether Greener – ensuring an attractive and 'liveable' local environment and contributing to tackling global environmental challenges.

This vision is shared with our partners and set out in the county's Sustainable Community Strategy. It is reassuring to note that during the current economic climate with all public sector agencies facing large reductions in government funding, the council and its partners have reaffirmed their commitment to the above vision and the objectives that have previously been developed for each of the above priority themes.

The Council Plan sets out our corporate priorities for improvement and the key actions that the council will take in support of the delivery of the long-term goals in the Sustainable Community Strategy. It also identifies the improvements that the council wants to make in how it manages itself. These actions are captured in a sixth priority theme of an **Altogether Better Council**.

Each of the above priority themes is underpinned by detailed objectives and outcomes and a high level action plan for delivery set out in sections ten to fifteen of this Council Plan.

Planning environment

The council has developed its corporate, service and financial plans in a very challenging economic climate and at a time of significant change for local authorities. Unprecedented reductions in grant funding to local government will result in the Council's funding from the Government reducing by about 40% between 2011 and 2017. Reforms to the welfare system and the National Health Service impact both on the council and our communities. All of these changes are challenging. It is through effective planning that we manage these changes and strive to minimise the impact of austerity measures on our residents and service users.

Council resources

The Government's main policy response to the recession has been to embark on a deficit reduction programme to be achieved mainly through cuts to public sector spending. Councils in the North East collectively have the largest percentage reduction in spending⁹. Durham County Council is planning to deliver savings of £224m over the six-year period of 2011/12 to 2016/17. The Local Government Finance Settlement consultation published in December 2013 confirmed a 11.5% cut in Government funding for 2014/15 with an additional 16% in 2015/16. Funding reductions are expected to continue up to 2020.

To achieve the savings required to balance our budget the council has adopted an approach that seeks to minimise the effects on frontline services wherever possible. Significant savings are being achieved through reductions to management costs, and support services. 64% of savings to date have been made from non-frontline services, exceeding our initial aspiration that at least half would be from non-frontline services. However, this will become increasingly difficult to achieve in future years. The council also needs to absorb inflationary pressures at a time of increasing demand for services. These savings requirements have required us to fundamentally challenge each line of the budget for every service and explore more innovative approaches to service delivery. This work will continue to dominate our thinking over the course of this Council Plan. A full list of savings and review work agreed by the council is at Appendix 2.

Welfare reform

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 heralds the biggest change to the welfare state since its creation in the 1940s. The aim of the legislation is to simplify the benefits system, make it fairer and encourage people into work. The act introduces a number of changes to the way in which benefits are administered and which are also designed to deliver large reductions to the Government's welfare budget. The scale of the reforms is significant and involves over 40 changes to the current system. Many of these changes have a larger impact on County Durham because of the demographic profiles which consist of a large number of people on low incomes. Areas with a history of heavy industry also have a larger proportion of the population with a disability and who are dependent on benefits.

The main changes to welfare as a result of the Act include:

- The phased introduction of Universal Credit (UC) which is currently being piloted. This single benefit will replace six existing benefits (Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance', Income-related Employment and Support Allowance,

⁹ Local government spending: where is the axe falling? Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2012.

Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit.)
The Government plan to have rolled out the new benefit by 2016;

- The abolition of both Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB), with CTB replaced by a localised council tax support scheme determined by individual local authorities;
- The abolition of the Social Fund administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) from April 2013 which comprises 'last resort' benefits such as Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans, replaced by a non-ring fenced grant paid to local authorities. This funds a local Welfare Assistance Scheme in Durham which is administered by the charity, Five Lamps. That funding will discontinue after 2015/16.
- The Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will be replaced for all working age claimants by a Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Durham was a pilot area and new claimants have been applying for the PIP since April last year. Existing DLA claimants will be moved onto the PIP between 2013 and 2017 ;
- The introduction of a cap in 2013 on the total benefits which an individual or a couple is entitled to;
- The introduction of a size criterion last year for payment of housing benefit in the social sector which means that tenants occupying a home with more bedrooms than they need are having their benefits reduced.

The ultimate effect of welfare reforms will largely depend on the strength of the wider economy and the extent to which effects of benefit reductions can be mitigated by being able to help people find work. This will be a challenge in the current economic climate. Employment figures in County Durham have shown recent improvements for the first time in three years. However, the employment rate still remains 7.7 percentage points below the national figure of 10. The North East and County Durham also have higher than average levels of incapacity benefit claimants with proportionately more claimants living in areas with a history of heavy industry.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has analysed the welfare reforms proposed for introduction over the next several years. Their findings are that they will be regressive i.e. they will take more proportionately from lower income groups than from higher income groups except for the very richest income group. A significant proportion of the population of County Durham (45.4%) live in the 30% most deprived areas in the country. County Durham is also the most deprived local authority area in the region in terms of the scale of income deprivation¹¹.

The IFS also estimates that families with children are expected to lose proportionately more of their income across the income distribution compared to pensioner households and households without children. Furthermore, the poorest households with children are estimated to lose the largest proportion of their income as a result of tax and benefit changes. Almost one in four children under the age of 16 live in poverty. For six communities in County Durham, the figure is over half of children living in poverty¹². Whilst the figures in County Durham are better than the average for the North East, the proportion is worse than the England national average.

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics, September 2013.

¹¹ Index of Deprivation, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010.

¹² Child Poverty, HM Revenue & Customs, 2012

We estimate that around 95,000 households in Durham will eventually be affected by the ongoing reforms to the welfare system. Any reductions to benefit payments to recipients within the county not offset by claimants moving into work will result in less income being available to spend in the local economy.

European Funding

Structural and Cohesion Funds are the European Union's main funding programmes for supporting social and economic restructuring across the EU. These funds are aimed at reducing the geographic and social differences in economic fortunes across EU member states. The EU 2014-2020 programme provides a significant opportunity to provide investment into the economic development of County Durham, at a time of reducing resources. Within the National Programme, a strong role has been given to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), who are to be given a notional allocation of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) for the programme period with a spend review period in 2017. The allocation for the North East LEP is €539.6 million for the programme period. Of this amount €157 million is Transition Region Money specifically for County Durham and €383 million for the rest of the LEP area. This equates to circa €305 per head for County Durham and €265 per head for the rest of the LEP area. In addition to this, the European Council has identified youth unemployment as a high priority and has created a Youth Employment Initiative. Durham will be able to access a further €9 million for 2014-2018.

Within the programme there are requirements as to the proportion of ERDF and ESF as well as minimum levels of spend for particular objectives. As a Transition Region there is more flexibility over spend than in those areas classed as More Developed Regions which means that within the North East LEP, County Durham has slightly more freedom to spend monies on local issues than the rest of the LEP area which is to be welcomed. This focuses the strategic leadership role for the County Durham Economic Partnership who has been tasked with leading on developing opportunities for County Durham.

The Future of Our Social Housing Stock (to be updated)

Durham County Council has formally submitted proposals to the government to transfer ownership of its 19,000 homes to a new not-for-profit social housing group. This group will include its existing housing management organisations – Dale and Valley Homes, Durham City Homes and East Durham Homes. Before a transfer can take place, council tenants will be asked to vote on whether they think that it should go ahead. This tenant vote is likely to take place in the summer of 2014.

Care and Support Reform

The Care Bill brings together care and support legislation into a new, modern set of laws and builds the system around people's wellbeing, needs and goals. It sets out new rights for carers, emphasises the need to prevent and reduce care and support needs, and introduces a national eligibility threshold for care and support. It introduces a cap on the costs people will have to pay for care and sets out a universal deferred payment scheme, whereby the government states that people will not have to sell their home in their lifetime to pay for residential care.

The Bill places a duty on local authorities to carry out their care and support responsibilities (including carers' support and prevention services) with the aim of joining up services with those provided by the NHS and other health-related services (for example, housing or leisure services).

Better Care Fund

In June 2013, the government announced that it would be allocating £3.8 billion to a pooled budget called the Better Care Fund. In County Durham, joint plans have been developed between the local authority and Clinical Commissioning Groups and £43.735m has been allocated locally on health and social care initiatives through pooled budget arrangements from 2015/16.

The aim for the Better Care Fund is to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of County Durham by innovating and transforming services, with a focus on reducing reliance on long term health and social care, providing more preventative services, helping people to stay independent in their own homes, and improving care in community settings.

Tougher Regulatory Regime

The government has done much to reduce the burden of centrally imposed regulation on local authorities whilst retaining inspection in areas where it is necessary to protect vulnerable people and public welfare including health, children's services and adult social care.

The Care Quality Commission which is the body responsible for regulating and inspecting health and adult social care services in England is introducing a tougher regime following recommendations of a number of national inquiries including the Francis Report into the failings at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. This new approach to regulation will include a better registration system for new care services, improvements to how services are inspected, establishing clear standards of care, a new rating system to encourage improvement and help people choose between services and the introduction of a tougher response to poor care.

Ofsted inspects and regulates services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

Ofsted has introduced a number of changes to the way in which it inspects early years provision, schools and local authorities. Early years providers are subject to a tougher early years inspection framework, which will be used to make sure that they are delivering a high quality service.

Ofsted's single inspection framework brings together into one inspection child protection, services for looked after children and care leavers, and local authority fostering and adoption services. Inspectors will make three key judgements in the single inspection, focusing on the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection; the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanent homes and families for them; and leadership, management and governance.

The reintroduction of local authority school improvement inspections aims to assist local authorities in their duty to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential in schools and other education and training providers, so that all children and young people benefit from at least a good education.

Durham County Council has a team of subject specialist inspectors so that we can respond to the needs of schools (including primary schools) from a subject perspective. This means that we are very well placed to advise schools about, for instance, the challenges of the new national curriculum at a critical subject-specific level. A number of our officers are trained as additional inspectors working for Ofsted, which gives personnel a critical insight into the inspection process and enables us to advise schools and settings with genuine precision.

Schools in Northumberland, Sunderland, Hartlepool, Darlington and elsewhere buy into County Durham's support services. This level of optional involvement with the local authority is a resounding endorsement of the quality of support currently on offer, especially in a climate where many independent consultants and school support organisations (including large national players) have entered the marketplace.

Whilst Durham has an excellent assessment record, these regulatory changes are about raising the bar in the services that we provide. We will continue to work with partners to ensure that we provide the best possible services to children and adults.

School Funding in 2015-16 and Beyond

The government has plans to review the way in which schools are funded in England. The current funding system is old and based on historic decisions made by previous governments. It means that the amount of funding per pupil differs widely between local authority areas. The review will build upon the pupil premium which was introduced in 2011 and is paid to schools to help support disadvantaged children and young people. The Department for Education will be consulting on options for school funding reform in 2014.

Schools have been protected by spending cuts to date. Local authorities and academies receive Education Services Grant to support essential services provided to schools. The Chancellor has announced that this grant will be reduced by £200 million or 20% in 2015-16 and will target local authorities to make further efficiencies focusing only on the core essential services to schools.

Children and Families Bill and SEN Reform

New legislation to transform the support given to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities is currently going through Parliament. Changes are planned to the way in which statements, reviews and services will be provided and publicised. Local authority responsibility will be defined as being for people aged 0-25 years old which will extend rights and protections of young people into further education and training. Joined up education, health and care plans will replace statements of special educational needs. Plans will come with the option of personal budgets.

The Children and Families Bill will also introduce reforms to the systems for adoption, looked after children and family justice. The Bill promotes 'fostering for adoption' so that children are placed sooner with the families that are likely to adopt them. It will also encourage growth in the childcare sector, introduce a new system of shared parental leave and ensure that children in England have a strong advocate for their rights.

Stronger Families Programme

The Stronger Families Programme led by Durham County Council with the involvement of a number of partner agencies was launched in 2012 with the aim of turning around the lives of over 1,300 families within the county that have been identified as experiencing problems ranging from low level crime and anti-social behaviour, children and young people with poor school attendance and young people and/or parents who are not in work. Government funding has been made available to incentivise local authorities and their partners to develop new ways of working with families focusing on lasting change. Local authorities are paid up to £4,000 per family. This is a payment-by-results based funding scheme and will be paid on achievement of pre-determined measurable improvements.

In response to the national programme, Durham County Council and partner agencies have been developing new ways of working over the past year with children, young people and their families facing multiple and complex challenges. The programme involves partnership working to embed a whole-family approach across all of our services, with the collective aims of:

- getting children back into school
- cutting youth crime and anti-social behaviour across the whole family
- getting adults into work
- reducing the costs to the taxpayer of tackling their problems.

Climate Change

Climate change continues to be a major policy driver in County Durham. The council is well placed to drive and influence carbon reductions within the county through the services that we deliver such as waste, transport and the buildings and equipment that we use. We can also use our position as a social landlord, major employer, community leader and through our regulatory and strategic functions such as planning. We can also support the development of a low carbon economy in the region through the targeting of available European funding. We recognise that some climate change is inevitable and mitigating against the effects of this is a key objective for the council. We have a role in preparing for this by adapting to a range of potential climate change impacts across the county as highlighted by recent flooding events in other parts of the country.

Risk Management

An essential part of corporate and service planning is the consideration of risks and actions that the council can take to minimise or eliminate their occurrence or their impact on service delivery. Risk management is integrated within the council's annual planning cycle and risks are kept under regular scrutiny with a formal review of all service and corporate risks being carried out on a quarterly basis by the council's Corporate Risk Management Group. The council's Audit Committee is responsible for monitoring the development and operation of risk management and the overall corporate governance of the authority. Risks are assessed at two levels: gross impact and likelihood based on an assessment of the risk without any controls in place; and net impact and likelihood based on the assessment of the current risk after taking into account the existing controls and mitigating actions in place.

Consultation

The council has a good track record of consulting the public on spending decisions. A consultation exercise was carried out in 2010 where public were asked to identify priority services for protection against budget cuts. The results of this exercise were used to inform our budget setting process for 2011 to the present date. The results of a survey carried out in 2012 showed that the public believed that the council had managed spending reductions effectively.

A new programme of budget consultation was carried out in 2013. Attendees at events across 14 Area Action Partnerships were invited to take part in a desktop exercise where participants were asked to make decisions on levels of reductions to make to a range of services to help meet a £100m saving in the council's revenue budget. Almost 1,300 people took part in these exercises. Results from these local events were supplemented by 2,074 individual paper based and 517 online responses. Responses to questionnaires indicated that almost all (97%) of participants enjoyed the exercise, thought that it was easy to understand (98%), easy to use (99%), that their views had been listened to (97%) and that there was sufficient time to complete the exercise (92%).

The services most frequently prioritised for larger savings in the consultation were as follows:

- **Finance, legal, IT and human resources**¹³
- Planning services
- Maintenance of council buildings
- Grass cutting, trees and flower beds
- **Subsidised bus travel**¹³
- **Performance management, policy and communications**¹³
- **Democratic support – decisions and elections**¹³
- Borrowing for new developments
- Support for community projects, centres, partnerships and groups
- Collection, disposal and recycling of waste

The services identified by consultees as requiring a smaller reduction were:

- Job creation
- Social work and protecting vulnerable children and adults
- Support for adults in their homes
- Gritting and snow clearance

¹³ Services highlighted in bold were prioritised for larger savings by focus groups, respondents to paper based and online services

- School support and education services
- Children's centres and support for families

There was support from the focus groups for a council tax rise of up to two percent but very little support for a rise in excess of this level.

These consultation results will be used to inform future decisions on financial planning and budget setting.

Performance and Efficiency

The council has a corporate planning framework which sets out how the performance of its services is managed. Objectives setting out what the council wants to achieve over the next three years are developed together with key measures which are used to determine the extent to which our objectives are being met. Plans setting out the actions that we will take to achieve our objectives and maintain performance are also drawn up. Monitoring reports of the progress against these actions and performance against key measures detailed within this plan are considered by senior managers and councillors on a quarterly basis. A range of actions are taken where services are found to be underperforming including taking remedial action such as carrying out further investigations, allocating additional resources or employing new processes or working with other agencies to bring performance within target.

The council's performance needs to be considered in the context of reducing budgets and staff numbers and also increasing demand for a number of our services including face-to-face contacts at our customer access points, presentations at our Housing Solutions Service, applications for housing benefit and requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act.

Despite the tough financial climate for the council, we have achieved improvements in many areas. Noteworthy achievements last year include:

Altogether Wealthier

- 2013 Durham's Year of Culture has helped to increase visitor numbers, initially estimated to be up by 16 per cent for the county and 146 per cent for Durham City.
- Major planning applications are 50 per cent higher in Q2 2013/14 than the previous year and the percentage of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks is now 67.4 per cent, 10 percentage points above the national average.
- Over 88 per cent of planning applications are determined within statutory guidelines.
- The employment rate is improving and compares favourably to the rest of the North East region with youth unemployment falling quarter on quarter for the last year.
- The number of empty properties brought back into use through local authority intervention continues to improve and exceeds target.

- Performance against the decent homes standard across all council owned stock of 18,500 homes continues to improve and is on course to achieve target.
- The council has been instrumental in attracting top class businesses such as Hitachi Rail UK to the county and in securing major property investments such as Durham Gate, Freeman's Reach and NETPark.
- The council has invested in its own apprenticeship support programme, creating 357 additional places for young people across the county since November 2011.

Altogether Better for Children and Young People

- GCSE results in our schools have improved for the eleventh consecutive year and both GCSE and A-level results are higher than regional and national averages.
- Our award winning pre-reprimand disposal system ensures that the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system continues to decline and is significantly lower than regional and national averages.
- The rate of re-offending for young offenders has reduced significantly over the last 18 months.
- The County Durham Think Family Programme has been recognised nationally by Louise Casey and the Troubled Families National Programme as a model of best practice. Our pre-birth intervention work has won national acclaim and awards for early years family support and child protection.
- Our fostering service was rated as outstanding by Ofsted as were our safeguarding services. Durham's inspection judgement was the equal second highest of 151 local authorities inspected in the country.

Altogether Healthier

- Both male and female life expectancy in the county are increasing.
- The teenage conception rate continues to improve and is better than the regional average.
- Key performance indicators demonstrate effective management of care for older people and vulnerable residents whilst maintaining high levels of satisfaction. 88.5 per cent of older people are still at home 91 days after discharge compared to the England average of 81.5 per cent and the percentage of service users reporting that the help and support they receive has made their quality of life better is 94.3 per cent, over six percentage points above the national average.
- A larger proportion of service users required no on-going care following completion of their reablement package and this is exceeding target. The percentage of adults receiving secondary mental health services that were known to be in settled accommodation at the time of their last review exceeds target and provisional national and comparator group averages.
- The percentage of social care users in receipt of community services who have a personal budget continues to improve and exceeds the national average.

Altogether Safer

- Overall crime per 1,000 population was 52.8 in 2011/12 compared to 71.0 nationally, and it fell to 44.9 in 2012/13 compared to 64.3 nationally.
- Police recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour fell from 45,200 in 2010/11 to under 25,500 in 2012/13.
- The numbers of adult social care users reporting that the care and support helps them to feel safe and secure significantly exceeds national figures.

Altogether Greener

- We will continue to build on the previous successful completion of projects such as the smooth transition to the new waste contracts which have provided significant savings
- We have made excellent progress in recycling and composting rates and levels of municipal waste being landfilled, with Durham outperforming the regional and national averages.
- We have already exceeded our ambitious target to reduce carbon dioxide emissions across the county by 40 per cent by 2020.
- We have invested over £4 million in installing solar PV panels onto council buildings and through our building efficiency retrofit project making improvements to heating and lighting systems.
- Our street lighting efficiency programme will save £2 million whilst reducing our carbon footprint.
- The lighting scheme we designed for Durham Cathedral and Castle has won the international Auroralia Award for exemplary and original sustainable urban lighting. The scheme has also been shortlisted in the national Lighting Design Awards 2014.

Altogether Better Council

- Key corporate health indicators such as council tax and business rates collection rates continue to improve.
- Housing rent arrears across all providers is achieving target, bucking the trend experienced in other parts of the country following welfare reform.
- 100 per cent of the stock owned and managed by the council (Durham City Homes) met the decent homes standard at the end of last year.
- Our income team won 'Most Improved team of the year' at the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) awards.
- Our auditors gave the authority an unqualified value for money conclusion.

Equality and Diversity

Equality is at the heart of our planning processes. Our Council Plan and Service Plans contain actions to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations in line with the Equality Act 2010. The actions support our corporate aims and objectives which are set out in our Corporate Equalities Policy and were based on evidence and consultation, these are:

Aim 1 – Provide high quality accessible services to all by:

- Understanding the needs of County Durham’s diverse communities;
- ensuring equal access to council services, and;
- improving services to meet diverse customer needs.

Aim 2 – Be a diverse organisation by:

- Providing strong leadership in relation to equality and diversity;
- recruiting and retain a diverse workforce, and;
- promote equality and diversity through working practices.

Aim 3 – Work with others to promote equality countywide by:

- Working effectively with underrepresented communities;
- working effectively with partners, and;
- integrating equality and diversity through commissioning and procurement.

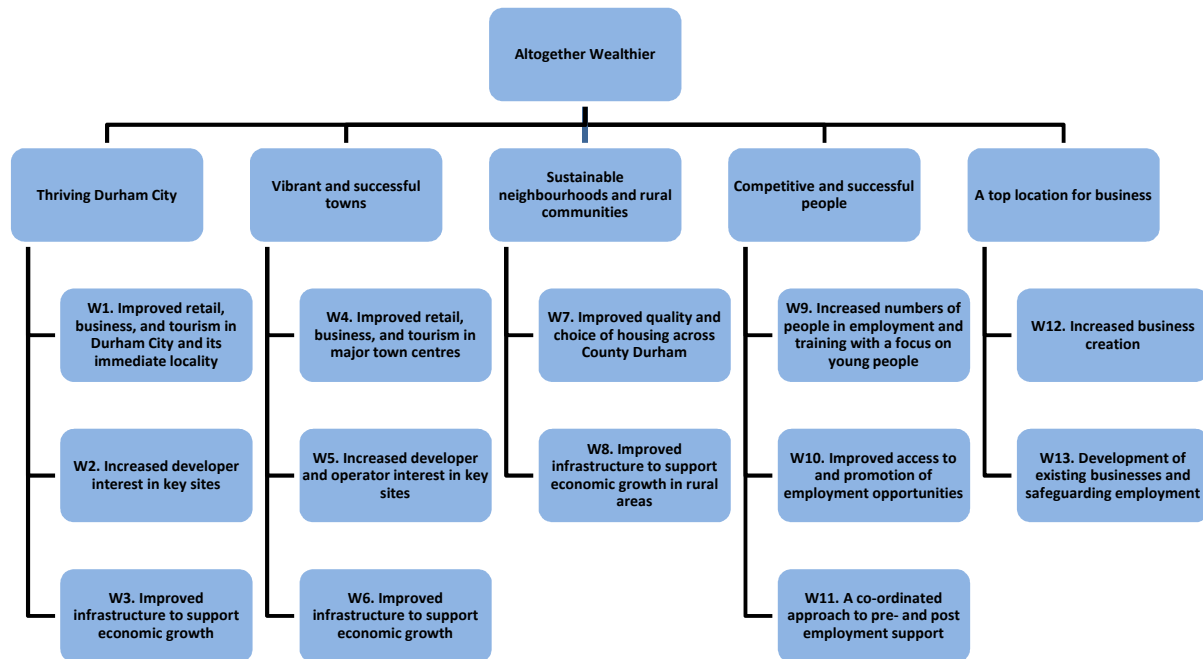
Equality actions from the Council Plan and service plans are monitored and reported to senior managers and councillors as part of our corporate performance management process. In addition, we have an equality impact assessment process to identify actions relating to specific service or policy changes and key decisions including proposals for achieving savings within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Conclusions

Our analysis of national policy imperatives, local needs, current performance and consultation data has helped us to formulate the priorities contained within this plan. The council’s requirement to make substantial savings following government grant reductions to balance our budget remains a priority. It is important that the council continues to effectively programme manage the achievement of these savings so that they are realised in a planned way. Demand for many of the council’s advice, guidance and support services has increased as a result of the economic downturn and reforms to the welfare system. Managing the performance of our services against a background of reducing budgets and increasing demand in some areas is a major challenge for the council.

Our plan is sub-divided into a section on each of our priority themes. Each section details the objectives and outcomes that we have developed following our policy analysis work. It also sets out the narrative of what we are trying to achieve. **Did you know** and **look out for** sections provide further information in relation to each objective for the reader. Through our performance management framework, we have been able to measure and highlight some recent successes in the **going well** sections whilst the **cause for concern** sections show the areas under each objective where we would like to perform better. These issues are addressed in the **high level action plans** designed to deliver our ambitions for each objective. Progress against these action plans together with performance against the measures set out in **Appendix 1** are how we intend to monitor and report on this plan throughout the forthcoming year.

Altogether Wealthier



Our ambition underpinning the vision of an Altogether Wealthier Durham is to shape a county where people want to live, work, invest and visit and enable our residents and businesses to achieve their potential. This ambition requires commitment to the transformation of the county, shared across public and private stakeholders and supported by residents. Placing Durham City as our key driver for growth, success will require us to capitalise on untapped potential in order to narrow the productivity and employment gap between the county, the region and the UK.

The County Durham Regeneration Statement looks over the next ten years to a challenging integrated programme of activity which takes advantage of our key assets and tackles constraints to growth. Our partnership Regeneration Statement has five key ambitions and objectives to drive forward activity; Thriving Durham City; Vibrant and Successful Towns; Competitive and Successful People; Sustainable Neighbourhoods and Rural Communities; and a Top Location for Business. We will strive to deliver a step change in the local economy by lifting the constraints on development and stimulating investment in infrastructure at a time of limited resources and significant national policy shifts.

The key driver to stimulate an economic renaissance within the county is the employment rate; for improving this will increase levels of disposable income, increase the number of businesses, and should, as a result, begin to reduce the chronic levels of relative deprivation. As a county we need to aim to achieve an extra 30,000 in employment over the next 20 years, through business growth, inward investment and business creation. It is also important that we continue to invest in our human capital through skills development and by supporting our residents to access and maintain employment opportunities. We must continue to address the needs of our most vulnerable residents and mitigate the impact of welfare reform, in order to improve people's quality of life and improve economic prosperity.

1. Thriving Durham City

At the heart of the North East, Durham City is a hub of economic and cultural activity that stands out as a key economic driver for the county and region. The city has enormous potential and will help to deliver a significant share of a step change in the growth of the region and the largest contribution from the county as a whole. The city needs a critical mass of employment, population and visitors to build on the assets already inherent to become a city of regional, national and international significance. We aim to exploit Durham City's potential and what the city has to offer. By maximising the development opportunities of the city we will help to stimulate retail, business and housing growth, which will lead to job creation and increased business confidence. A core business quarter at Aykley Heads, a housing offer that complements economic growth, a visitor offer that encourages visitors to stay longer, together with the associated infrastructure needed to support this growth is therefore central to our approach.

Going well

- The Former Ice Rink site in Durham City has been demolished and construction has started for a mixed use development, including business space and leisure to be known as 'Freemans Reach'.
- There have been 584,243 passenger journeys on the three Durham City Park and Ride sites, which is a 9% increase in usage compared to the same period last year. This could be attributed to the excellent summer weather and events like the Gospels, Streets of Durham and the Brass Festival.
- The bus corridor improvement works at the A167 at Croxdale have been completed.
- A new Police Headquarters at Aykley Heads is due for completion by September 2014.

Cause for concern

- The economic climate continues to make it difficult for the private sector to invest in schemes across the city.
- The level of homes completed in the city remains low.
- Delays to the extension of Sniperley Park and Ride site mean it will not be completed until December 2015.
- Funding for flood mitigation from the government remains challenging but the Council continues to discuss options with partners.

Did you know?

- The 'Lumiere' light festival attracted 175,000 people into the city between the 14th and 17th November 2013.
- 97,208 tickets were sold for the Lindisfarne Gospels exhibition (1 July - 30 September 2013).
- Transport modelling for the Western and Northern Relief Roads has been completed, which will inform public consultation on the County Durham Plan.
- The Pearl Izumi Tour Series Cycle Race 2013 in Durham City attracted 12,000 spectators and TV viewing figures of 297,000.
- Durham International BRASS Festival attracted more than 35,000 visitors.
- Durham Book Festival 2013 reached more than 8,000 people.

- The 180th Durham Regatta in 2013 welcomed more than 600 crews from all over the UK to compete on the River Wear.

Look out for:

- A regeneration framework for Durham City is expected to be completed by April 2014.
- Details of the strategy and business case for Aykley Heads will be produced in 2014.
- Development of a new roundabout on the A167 at Sunderland Bridge.
- Completion of housing regeneration works at Esh Winning.
- Development of a new bus station in Durham City expected by December 2015.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Agree the development plan of Elvet waterside	Head of Economic Development & Housing	September 2014
Produce a delivery strategy for Aykley Heads	Head of Economic Development & Housing	March 2015
Construction of a new roundabout at Sunderland Bridge	Head of Transport & Contract Services	March 2015
Agree a delivery plan for Milburngate House	Head of Economic Development & Housing	June 2015
Relocate the bus station on North Road	Head of Transport & Contract Services	December 2015
Obtain planning consent for the Western Relief Road in Durham	Head of Transport & Contract Services	December 2015

2. Vibrant and successful towns

Vibrant towns are good for business: they create jobs, attract investment and generate income - they are engines for economic growth. At their best, they create a discernible local buzz and define the wider area, attracting people from near and far. County Durham has a dispersed settlement pattern with a large number of distinct towns, not all of which are meeting the needs of local communities. Through our 'Whole-Town' approach we will increase the vitality and vibrancy of our main settlements. This 'Whole-Town' approach is specific to each settlement and enables tailored solutions and coordinated investment for each place depending on its needs and service potential for its locality. Creating vibrant and successful towns is a complex task, dealing with interrelated issues and driven by wider economic and environmental factors. Each town is different, with its own opportunities to take advantage of and needs and issues to tackle. However, we aim to create places that

are attractive, well managed, and well designed with a range of amenities and facilities for that given community.

Going well

- Highways works at DurhamGate are now complete.
- Physical improvements to Barnard Castle Town Centre have been completed including landscaping works at the Castle and Scar Top and Amen Corner.
- A Heart of Teesdale website has also been launched.
- The County Durham Plan has been out for consultation and work is ongoing to prepare the “Publication” Draft Plan which is the version which will be submitted to the Secretary of State.
- Construction of the Horden link road project is now complete.
- Co-location of Durham County Council and Cestria Community Housing in a new customer access point in Chester-le-Street town centre.
- Digital Durham - the official launch of the first ‘fibre cabinet’ which can supply fast speed broadband to businesses and residents in the heart of the city, supporting regeneration, economic growth and job opportunities.

Cause for concern

- The number of applications for planning permission, seen as an indication of the buoyancy of the economy has been declining since 2011/12.
- Development of additional car parking at Auckland Castle has been delayed to July 2015
- The St. John Square redevelopment in Seaham has been delayed and will now be completed in September 2014.

Did you know?

- The North Dock Marina at Seaham was opened to the public, with a launch event held in July 2013.
- Durham’s Emirates International Cricket Ground at Chester-le-Street hosted its first Ashes Test Match, the fourth in the series from the 9th to the 13th August 2013.
- Restoration of Witham Hall, Barnard Castle has provided a new venue for creative and cultural industries with a 225 seat auditorium for conference, theatre, events and cinema, created 61 jobs and supported 34 businesses.
- A further new business centre at Consett was completed in November 2013.
- Marie Curie Cancer Care Etape Pennines cycle race attracted more than 1,000 cyclists.
- You can see the hygiene ratings for over 3,500 catering and retail businesses operating across County Durham by visiting <http://food.gov.uk>.
- The Council successfully bid for Government funding to get junction 63 on the A1(M) at Chester-le-Street upgraded by March 2015.

Look out for:

- Completion of a new roundabout at Northlands and Perkinsville, Chester-le-Street.

- The Examination in Public of the County Durham Plan.
- Completion of improvements of Heighington Railway Station serving Aycliffe Business Park.
- Improvements to the council's industrial unit property portfolio, including Tanfield Lea Business Park at Stanley and Stella Gill Industrial Estate at Chester-le-Street.
- Delivery of the South Durham Embracing Local-Motion project in Bishop Auckland, Shildon and Newton Aycliffe. This will provide improvements to travel facilities including rail stations, cycling facilities, bus service enhancements and an expansion of the electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Refurbishment of Spennymoor Cricket Club

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Introduction of a new signal controlled roundabout at Northlands, Chester-le-Street	Head of Transport & Contract Services	August 2014
Complete and share the Tourism visitor market assessment to enable the private and public sector to increase support for the tourism economy	Head of Economic Development & Housing	September 2014
Delivery of the Food and Drink Campaign	Head of Economic Development & Housing	December 2014
Complete road access improvements at Front Street, Stanley	Head of Transport & Contract Services	December 2014
Adoption of the County Durham Plan	Head of Planning & Assets	March 2015
Deliver improvements to Heighington Railway Station to support the Hitachi facility at Merchant Park	Head of Transport & Contract Services	March 2015
Develop and deliver a co-ordinated Events Programme for the county as set out in the Events Strategy	Head of Culture & Sport	March 2015
Deliver new car parking capacity at North Bondgate to support significant increase in tourists visiting Bishop Auckland	Head of Economic Development & Housing	July 2015
Construction of a new railway station at Horden on the Durham Coast Railway Line	Head of Transport & Contract Services	March 2016

Agree the delivery plan for the Seaham Colliery site with the Homes and Communities Agency	Head of Economic Development & Housing	May 2016
Secure a developer for a residential project for the North East Industrial Estate at Peterlee	Head of Economic Development & Housing	December 2016

3. Sustainable neighbourhoods and rural communities

Sustainable neighbourhoods and rural communities are places where people can and want to live and are places that help to enhance the wellbeing and potential of our communities. A sustainable place provides a quality built environment, with good housing and living conditions and access to services, through appropriate infrastructure. However, deprivation and inequalities persist in some communities in County Durham and also across the region as well as nationally. Industrial restructuring and job losses in manufacturing have disproportionately affected some of our communities within the county. The county's dispersed settlement pattern, low car ownership, low job density and rurality can compound deprivation and inequalities. This can have damaging effects upon an individual's life chances in a number of ways. There are both varying needs and a varying quality of place across the County and like the 'Whole Town' approach; each neighbourhood requires a different level or type of support to ensure sustainability. We will continue to provide tailored and appropriate solutions for our neighbourhoods. Investment in housing and transport is an essential component to regenerating our communities and improving our economic performance.

Going well

- Dale & Valley Homes and Durham City Homes are on course to achieve their target for all homes to meet the Government's decency standard by March 2014.
- East Durham Homes are well ahead of schedule and have extended their target from 25% to 21% of homes being non-decent by March 2014.
- At the end of Q3 2013/14, 674 private sector properties have been improved as a direct consequence of local authority intervention.
- Between April and December 2013, 80 properties were brought back into use as a result of local authority intervention.
- Traveller sites at Tower Road, Stanley and Drum Lane, Birtley are being refurbished.
- The number of affordable homes delivered at the end of Q3 was 314 against a profiled target of 262.

Cause for concern

- Analysis shows there is high demand for one bedroomed properties, and falling demand for three bedroomed properties. Houses let through the council's Durham Key Options scheme have increased but the number of empty properties is also increasing.

Did you know?

- The Government's decision is expected by April 2014 as to whether the council has a place on the transfer programme for the Council owned housing stock.
- Between April and December 2013, 3682 people were re-housed through the Durham Key Options System.
- 23.9 million bus passenger journeys were made on the network in 2012/13. As of September 2013; 11.9 million journeys have been made in 2013/14.

Look out for:

- Completion of housing regeneration works at Easington, Dawdon, Wheatley Hill and Craghead.
- Completion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites at West Rainton and Bishop Auckland.
- The decent homes improvement programme for Durham City Homes worth £3.5m will be completed by April 2015.
- A tenant vote on the future of the council's 18,500 homes in the summer of 2014.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Work with partners to develop a Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Strategy to improve the standards and quality of HMO accommodation within the private rented sector	Head of Environment, Health & Consumer Protection	July 2014
Obtain agreement with landowners to pursue the development of a Crook to Howden Multi-user Route	Head of Transport and Contract Services	March 2015
Implement a new 'in-house' County-wide Home Improvement Agency	Head of Economic Development & Housing	March 2015
Pursue the preferred option for the future of Council housing across County Durham	Head of Economic Development & Housing	March 2015
Bring the following empty homes back into use through a programme of targeted support:	Head of Economic Development & Housing	
South Durham - 55		March 2015
East Durham - 40		March 2015
North Durham - 25		March 2015

Implement a £3.5m decent home improvement programme for Durham City Homes	Head of Direct Services	April 2015
Redevelop the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller permanent sites at the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adventure Lane, West Rainton • Tower Road, Stanley • Drum Lane, Birtley • Green Lane, Bishop Auckland 	Head of Economic Development & Housing/ Head of Direct Services	June 2015
Deliver the first Durham County Council market housing scheme for rent and sale	Head of Economic Development and Housing	June 2016
Digital Durham: Increase availability of technology across the county by developing the Digital Durham programme for next generation broadband delivery to all areas of the county - in partnership with Broadband Development UK (BDUK). Deployment to commence from quarter 1 2014/15	Head of ICT Services	September 2016

4. Competitive and successful people

The skills, abilities and attitudes of the current and future County Durham workforce are critical to the future economic success of the county and will underpin a more competitive and productive economy. County Durham has below national average employment and higher skills attainment levels, and above regional and national average economically inactive residents claiming benefits. We need to provide pre and post-employment support and encourage people to develop their skills and recognise transferable attributes for current or future employment in order to increase individual success, improve life chances and to ease the progression into work or within work. At a time of uncertainty, compounded with the onset of significant welfare reform and limited resources, we continue to work with partners, employers and employability support providers to ensure support for County Durham residents and to help them access employment opportunities.

It is important that we work closely with employers and continue to raise aspirations, participation and attainment of our young residents so they can make the most of available opportunities and have the best chance of being competitive and successful.

Going well

- There have been 109 apprentices who have started through the council's apprenticeship programme as at Q3 2013/14.
- 1036 cases of homelessness were prevented through advice and assistance provided by the council.

Cause for concern

- The proportion of people who have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance for one year or more has continued to increase and is 36.35% (December 13).

Did you know?

- The merger of the three credit unions in County Durham is now complete.
- The Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 has been published.
- A triage process has been introduced to manage the impact of welfare reform and assist tenants and residents across County Durham.
- The council's bespoke apprenticeship scheme has directly helped 357 residents to start an apprenticeship since the scheme began in November 2011 up to December 2013.

Look out for:

- Development of a real time travel information system across the county.
- A decision will be made on the future management of 19,000 council owned houses in late 2014.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Deliver a programme to support the progression of young people classed as 'Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	Head of Economic Development & Housing	June 2014
Develop and implement a real time travel information system across the county	Head of Transport & Contract Services	September 2014
Prepare and submit a funding bid and develop a programme for the 'Erasmus Project' to enable an international exchange programme for apprentices	Head of Strategy, Programmes & Performance	March 2015
Deliver a County Durham Apprenticeship Programme to support people into work through the provision of wage subsidy to employers	Head of Economic Development & Housing	March 2015

5. A top location for business

County Durham is home to a wide range of businesses from micro rural businesses to large multinationals, from small scale engineering to large scale manufacturing and from business services to internationally leading research companies. The county offers businesses support and development opportunities and these must be sustained to serve the diversity that exists.

County Durham's business base grew during the sustained growth of the last decade up to the start of the recession. However; we did not experience the same gains as other areas during a period of expansion, we were harder hit during the economic downturn and we have been slower in regards to employment growth since the UK economy has emerged from the recession. Public sector contraction and government cuts since 2010 have further compounded the issues. It is important we continue to take a balanced approach to growing and sustaining existing businesses, developing our labour force, establishing new businesses and attracting inward investment. Investment must embed with our local supply chains and networks to boost our economic potential. To become a top location for business we are supporting innovation, removing constraints to investment and growth, and enabling infrastructure development to improve our business offer.

Going well

- The Hitachi supply chain capability mapping is progressing well
- 76.5% of Council owned factories and business support centre floor-space was occupied.
- The 'Viewpoint' Business Centre at Consett was completed in November 2013.

Cause for concern

- Lack of funding to support new business start-ups is restricting the ability of partners to increase our business space.
- Access to finance is still a problem for small businesses in the county.

Did you know?

- The Future Business Magnates Awards ceremony was held in June 2013.
- There have been nearly 3 million recorded visitors to the main attractions in County Durham and almost 400,000 in Durham City alone for the first two quarters of 2013/14.
- The Bishop Auckland Food Festival held in April 2013 was run over two days for the first time and was attended by around 25,000 people.
- NETPark, the North East's science, engineering and technology park at Sedgefield now has 400 staff working there and supports 1,000 indirect jobs.

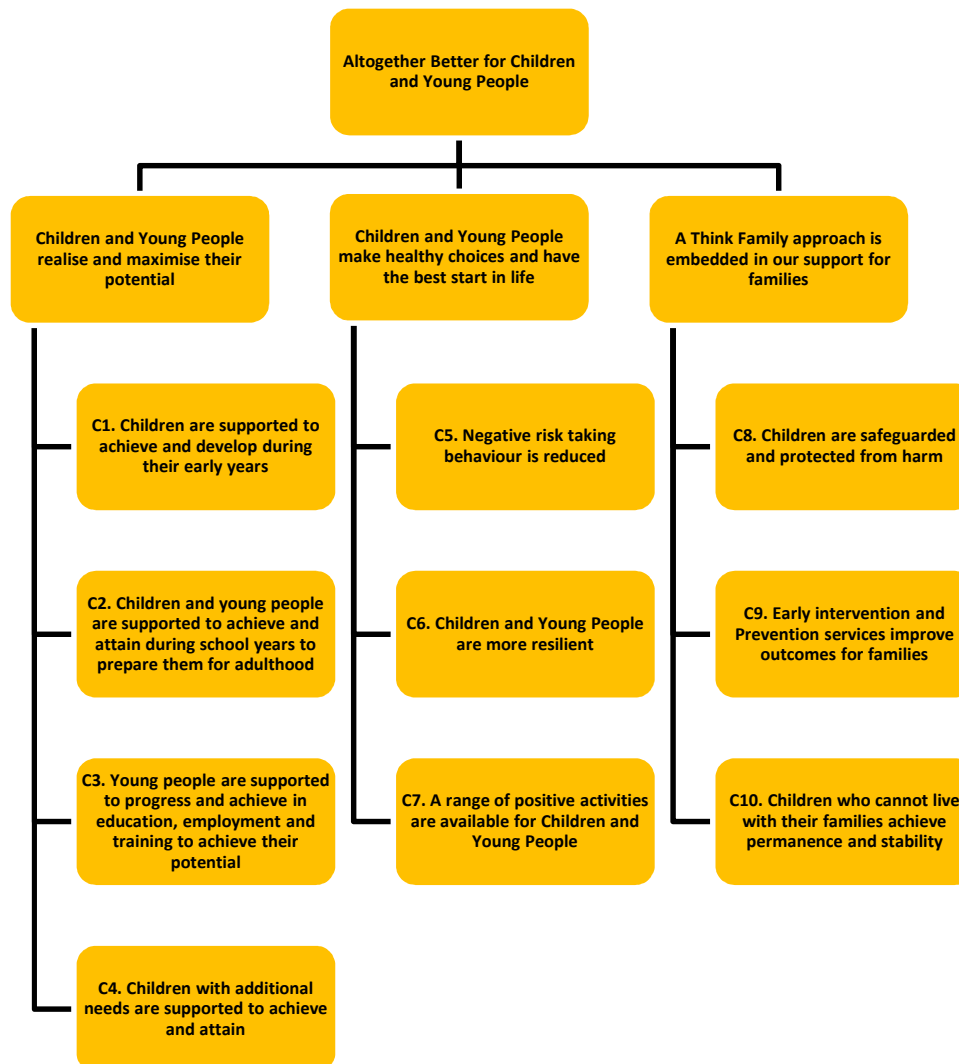
Look out for:

- A new Visitor Pocket Guide will be launched in Spring 2014.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Develop a £12m EU funded programme of activity to deliver access to finance support targeted at County Durham businesses	Head of Economic Development & Housing	December 2014
Develop relationships with businesses to identify and secure business growth and diversification	Head of Economic Development & Housing	March 2015
Deliver enterprise initiatives to stimulate enterprise awareness, actions and networks, including; the Future Business Magnates and the establishment of the Rural Enterprise Hub network	Head of Economic Development & Housing	October 2015
Further develop NETPark and attract more businesses by developing the premises and expanding the product offer to a broader technology community to grow the economic activity of NETPark	Head of Economic Development & Housing	March 2015

Altogether Better for Children and Young People



Children, young people and their families continue to be the focus of partnership working across the county between Durham County Council and the Children and Families Partnership. Our vision is for all children, young people and families in County Durham to be safe and healthy and to be given the opportunity to 'believe, achieve and succeed'.

The number of young people and children aged 0 to 17 has fallen by 6.1% since 2001 from 106,600 to 100,100 and is due to a fall in the number of births after the 2001 Census, following a national trend at that time. This fall in the 0 to 17 group is similar to that seen in the region (6.5% fall) while nationally there was a small increase of 1.5% over the same period. Currently, one in five people (21.6%) in the county are in this age group. This is predicted to fall slightly to 19.5% by 2030, however in numbers this represents a 6.6% rise in number to 106,700 by 2030.

It is important for the future of the county that our children and young people are supported to make the best start in life and able to make the right choices as they grow up.

Providing support to families, and not just individuals, is also important – this is taken forward by having a “Think Family” approach which focuses on the family as a whole rather than just on individual adults and children.

Durham County Council works in partnership to deliver the Stronger Families programme, known nationally as Troubled Families, which aims for lasting change, resulting in families achieving positive outcomes. These include getting children and young people back into school, provision of universal services such as out of school activities, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and getting young people and parents back on the road to employment. This is part of a ‘whole family’ way of thinking, so that support can be provided to those families who need it.

We will continue to listen to and work with children, young people and their families and involve them in all aspects of our work, including overall service planning and review as well as their support plans. It is important that we develop plans and initiatives which are right for our children and young people and will ensure that they are provided with opportunities to realise their ambitions.

1. Children and Young People realise and maximise their potential

We want to ensure that children and young people in County Durham are supported and encouraged to be the best that they can be, no matter what their aspirations are.

We want to ensure that children and young people are able to thrive in the environment in which they live and learn in order to achieve their very best. We will offer support if this environment is not helping them to reach their potential. We believe in supporting achievement, raising aspirations and instilling a belief that children and young people can achieve. This will lead to greater choices throughout childhood, teenage years and on into adulthood and future employment.

We need to ensure that this commitment is sustained for all children and young people, including the most vulnerable, to ensure that they are appropriately supported in relation to their own needs.

Going well

- Continued improvement in GCSE attainment, with 63.1% of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent including English and Maths; this is the 11th year in a row where pass rates in the county have increased.
- 98.7% of pupils in community secondary schools achieved 2 A Levels at grade A*-E (Level 3) or equivalent, which is better than the national performance of 97.3%.
- Three year improvement trend at Key Stage 1 and above national average Key Stage 2 results
- The percentage of children attending a good or better school is higher than the national average and represents a significant improvement over time. Currently 84% of primary children and 88% of secondary children in maintained schools in Durham receive a good or better education.

Cause for concern

- The attainment gap at the Early Years Foundation Stage was greater in County Durham (33.4%) in the 2011/12 academic year than nationally (30.1%).

- The impact of the current economic climate on future opportunities for children, young people and their families such as lifestyle choices and employment.

Did you know?

- 91.4% of County Durham pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent at A*-C compared to 82.9% of state educated pupils nationally
- County Durham has achieved a three year improvement trend at Key Stage 1 and is above the national average for Key Stage 2 results

Look out for:

- A 'Start Today' project information booklet, to signpost young people between the ages of 16-19 not in education, employment or training to local training and apprenticeship opportunities in the county
- Education, Health and Care Plans to replace "Statements of Need" and a 'Local Offer' of support services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) under the new SEND reforms, which will be available from September 2014

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Improve education outcomes for children with special educational needs and other vulnerable groups, by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and publishing a web-based 'local offer' of education, health and social care services for children with special educational needs 	Head of Education	September 2014
Increase the participation of young people in learning and reduce the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the plan 'Believe, Achieve and Succeed : Increasing the Participation of Young People in Learning 2013- 2015' • Developing data and tracking mechanisms to support early intervention for those who need it 	Head of Education	March 2015

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing careers education, information, advice and guidance to support progression 		
<p>Invest in early years to ensure readiness for school by</p> <p>creating sufficient nursery places for disadvantaged two year olds, based on Department of Education information on eligibility</p>	Head of Education	April 2015
<p>Improve achievement in all phases of education by raising standards and narrowing gaps in performance between pupil groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Key Stage 1, increase Level 2b+ in reading and mathematics and narrow the gender and Free School Meals gap • For Key Stage 2, raise attainment in writing for more able pupils and narrow the gender gap in reading and writing 	Head of Education	August 2017

2. Children and young people make healthy choices and have the best start in life

Children and young people need the best possible start if they are to be successful and thrive later in life.

We want to provide support and promote healthy living from an early age, providing opportunities and choice for young people to participate in a range of sport, leisure and physical activities, helping to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Having a range of activities available for young people and their families can positively impact on a number of priorities such as maintaining a healthy weight, improving educational attainment, improving emotional wellbeing, reducing anti-social behaviour and improving self-esteem.

Risk-taking is a normal and healthy part of growing up, however, sometimes taking risks involves engaging in behaviour which leads to poorer or negative outcomes. We will encourage children and young people to be able to look after themselves

and others by making positive decisions about their behaviour and decisions they make.

In County Durham, we know that negative risk-taking behaviour can impact on higher teenage conceptions, higher alcohol and drugs use and youth crime. We will continue to provide children and young people with relevant and appropriate information and advice to help them make more informed choices regarding alcohol, drugs and relationships.

We also want children and young people to have resilience and to be able to cope more effectively with difficult situations. Good emotional health and wellbeing is crucial in the development of healthy, resilient children and young people, and being resilient often leads to more positive decision making in a person's life, no matter what their age.

However, some children and young people may experience mental health problems and where this is the case they will be further supported to access emotional wellbeing and mental health services as early as possible, which are appropriate to their needs.

Going well

- The Pre-Birth Intervention Service won 3 awards at the Children and Young People Now Awards. This pioneering service intervenes before children are born, to ensure that they get the best start in life, working with highly vulnerable families which have previously had children taken into care
- Physical activity levels in County Durham (56.7%) are higher than the England average (55.1%).

Cause for concern

- Although evidence suggests that the number of teenagers who drink has decreased in recent years, the amount of alcohol consumed by young people has increased.
- In County Durham, admission rates to hospital due to self-harm for 0-17 year olds in 2011/12 was significantly higher than England.

Did you know?

- In County Durham, vaccination coverage for many childhood diseases is significantly better than England.

Look out for:

- Continuation of a successful breastfeeding support scheme across the county, which has already seen over 100 local mothers trained as peer supporters and 16 baby cafés opened .
- Strategies to target support to the most vulnerable children, young people and families in the county regarding early years, early help and youth support.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Adopt the Council's approach to determining the distribution and range of fixed play equipment across the county	Head of Culture & Sports	October 2014
<p>Develop the wellbeing model to incorporate health and social care commissioning for County Durham, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing phase one of the wellbeing approach, with a provider in place to deliver services from existing access points and community buildings • Having an integrated approach across the council, so that joint planning and delivery enables communities and individuals to optimise their health and life opportunities • Working with primary care and specialised services to embed the wellbeing model in local service provision and reduce health inequalities in the county 	Director of Public Health County Durham	<p>September 2014</p> <p>September 2014</p> <p>March 2016</p>
<p>Work with partners to tackle risk-taking behaviour by young people (e.g. smoking, alcohol use, sexual health), by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the Social Norms programme in schools across the county, which highlights behaviours, so that risk-taking by young people is reduced 	Director of Public Health County Durham /Head of Children's Services	March 2015

<p>Implement the Youth Support Strategy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing youth support services to provide a clear focus on delivering targeted support to young people vulnerable to poor outcomes • Working with the voluntary and community sector to provide a comprehensive offer of positive activities to young people in County Durham 	<p>Head of Children's Services</p>	<p>March 2016</p>
<p>Continue to further reduce re-offending by children and young people, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully implementing the new national youth justice assessment framework (ASSETPlus) which allows an end to end assessment and one record to follow a young person throughout their time in the youth justice system 	<p>Head of Children's Services</p>	<p>March 2017</p>
<p>Improve health, educational and social outcomes for children and young people and enable them to cope better with difficult situations, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and implementing a resilience framework, to be used by professionals working in a range of universal and targeted settings with children and young people aged 0-19 (e.g. schools, children's centres, early years, youth or social care) 	<p>Director of Public Health County Durham</p>	<p>March 2017</p>

3. A Think Family approach is embedded in our support for families

We want to ensure that children and young people are kept safe from harm and that vulnerable families receive the support they need through the Stronger Families Programme. The 'Stronger Families' programme (known nationally as 'troubled families') provides support to families in the county experiencing problems or difficulties including:

- Those who have children who don't attend school or who are excluded;
- Those who are involved in antisocial behaviour or crime (including Domestic Abuse);
- Those not in work; and
- Those who result in high cost services such as families with children on the child protection list, families affected by parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental health problems.

Our vision is one where every child is protected from neglect and grows up in a safe environment, through effective working with our partner agencies.

We want to ensure that children, young people and their families are given the necessary social and emotional support at the earliest possible opportunity in order to reach their full potential. Preventing families from becoming vulnerable and enabling them to maximise their life chances is vitally important.

The complex issues faced by families who are in need of help often cannot be addressed by a single agency but demand a coordinated response, especially for those families who have children with additional needs. An integrated Think Family approach involves using a whole-family approach across all of our services and working with partners to provide early intervention for those families which have problems and cause problems to the community around them. This approach joins up local services, dealing with each family's problems as a whole, and using a range of methods to support families we will work with the most vulnerable families across County Durham to promote positive outcomes.

The implementation of our Early Help Strategy will deliver effective early intervention and prevention services to families in County Durham, whilst continuing to provide additional support to protect those children and young people who need it, by introducing First Contact, a 'single front door' for all referrals and a single assessment framework.

Generally, children in care have poorer outcomes than the wider population – particularly in relation to educational achievement, homelessness and mental health. We will continue to provide support to looked after children and young people in the county, to help them overcome the effects of the abuse and neglect they have suffered and to place them with families where they will achieve stability.

Going well

- County Durham's Stronger Families programme has identified and worked with 964 families as of December 2013, against a target of 1,320 by March 2015
- Durham County Council is in the top 20% of local authorities nationally in relation to the number of families 'turned around' through the Stronger Families programme

Cause for concern

- Safeguarding activity for children and young people continues to increase in County Durham.
- Of the 3,970 children in need as of 31st March 2013, 409 are subject to a child protection plan, a rate of 40.7 per 10,000 population. Although lower than the rate for the North East (51.1), it is still higher than the rate for England (37.9).

Did you know?

- Durham County Council works with the NHS, Clinical Commissioning Groups, schools, colleges, the police and the voluntary sector as part of the Children and Families Partnership, to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- For families needing extra help, a single support plan is agreed for the whole family, which clearly indicates what needs to change and how this will be achieved by everyone involved

Look out for:

- 'First Contact', a new referrals and assessment system for children, young people and families in County Durham, to ensure that families receive coordinated support at the earliest opportunity.
- Further promotion of adoption services within the county, to support the government's reforms to have more children being adopted by loving families with less delay.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Annual review of the Children Young People and Families Plan 2014/17, to inform the priorities of the Children and Families Partnership beyond April 2015	Head of Planning & Service Strategy	March 2015
Meet the requirements of adoption reform, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximising adoption for looked after children who are unable to live within their birth families• Ensuring that all children's cases are managed within the revised court timescales (Family Justice Review 2013)	Head of Children's Services	March 2015

Review the model of pre-birth intervention-led assessment for parents who have had previous children permanently cared for	Head of Children's Services	March 2015
Implement the placement stability action plan to improve fostering services for looked after children in the county	Head of Children's Services	March 2015
<p>Ensure that families receive effective help at the earliest opportunity, if they meet the following Stronger Families criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have children who don't attend school or who are excluded • Are involved in anti-social behaviour or crime • Are not in work • Have a range of health issues or are high cost 	Head of Children's Services	April 2015
<p>Transform Children's Services and implement the early help strategy, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting our workforce to assertively identify, help and support children, young people and families to stop their needs developing and enable them to have positive outcomes • Providing a single support plan for the whole family which clearly indicates the objectives of the family and the associated responsibilities of the family and the practitioners • Using a single but proportionate assessment model across all levels of need and assessment 	Head of Children's Services	March 2016

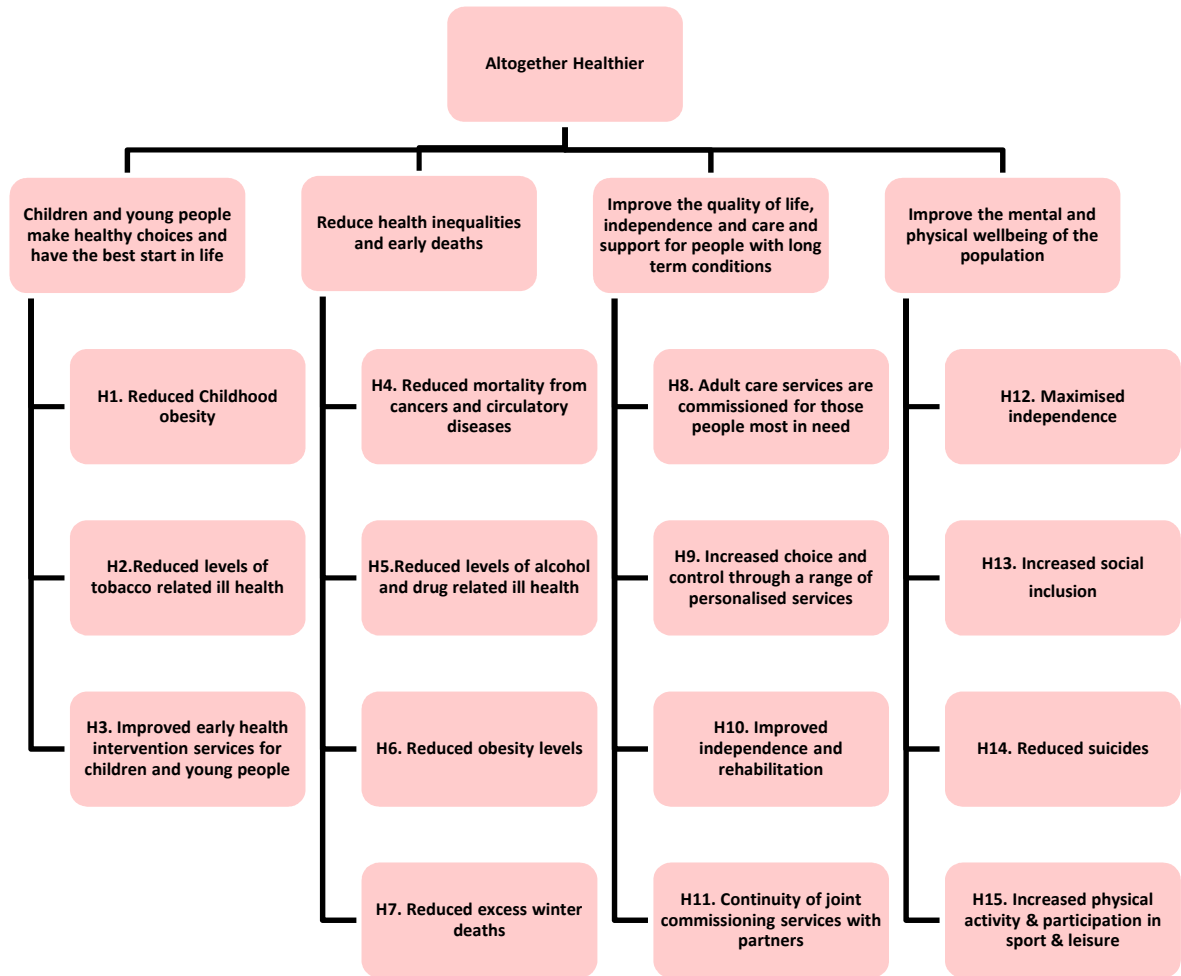
Implement the Looked After Children
Reduction Strategy, to:

Head of Children's Services

March 2017

- Reduce the number of looked after children in the county
- Provide effective alternatives to care and create permanent places for children and young people
- Reduce the number of looked after children reported as missing from care

Altogether Healthier



The Altogether Healthier theme focuses on providing early support to those who need it, joining up services with partners and giving people more choice over the services provided to meet their eligible needs.

Health in County Durham has improved significantly over recent years, but remains below average for England. Health inequalities remain in the County with levels of deprivation being higher than the average for England. Life expectancy is also lower in County Durham than the England average. Like many local authority areas in the country, County Durham has an ageing population which will place additional pressures on health and social care services over the coming years.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 has provided the opportunity through the Health and Wellbeing Board to work together to improve the health of the local population and reduce health inequalities. The Health and Wellbeing Board has refreshed the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for County Durham, which outlines a three year vision and sets priorities for commissioners to purchase health and social care services.

Working closely with Clinical Commissioning Groups, Durham County Council will continue to provide a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for County Durham, which includes the evidence relating to the health and wellbeing of people in the county.

The Care Bill aims to transform the social care system to focus on prevention and the needs and goals of people with eligible care needs. Reforms to social care support will be a significant focus from 2014, as the council works with partners to prepare for the changes required in 2015 and 2016. This includes transforming the way social care is delivered and putting processes in place to implement the cap of £72,000 on care costs.

1. Children and young people make healthy choices and have the best start in life

What happens to children before they are born and in their early years can affect their health and opportunities later in life, and those who grow up in a safe environment and have a healthy relationship with their parents and peers are more likely to do better as they go through life.

We want to do more to help children who grow up in the most vulnerable families and to support parents to give their children the best possible care. We also want to help children be as healthy as possible, by preventing illness and encouraging healthy behaviours. Working with partners across the county, and through focused consultation with children, young people and their families, we will continue to develop and deliver services which meet their needs and aspirations.

Going well

- County Durham's Pre-Birth Intervention Service won 3 awards at the Children and Young People Now Awards in London on 27th November 2013.
- County Durham has continued to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies from a rate of 54.4 per 1,000 15-17 year olds in 1998 to 31.8 in mid-2012; this is better than the regional average.
- Promotion of school meals uptake and subsidising the cost for school meals; over 50% of all primary school children have school meals in County Durham

Cause for concern

- Obesity prevalence in age 10-11 year olds (21.6%) is higher than the England average (19%).
- Alcohol-related hospital admission rates for children and young people under 18 (116 per 100,000) are higher than the regional and national rate (96.5 and 55.8 per 100,000 population).
- Admission rates to hospital due to self-harm for 0-17 year olds in 2011/12 were (228 per 100,000), higher than England (116 per 100,000 population).

Did you know?

- The rate of children and young people (0-17) in receipt of Disability Living Allowance is higher in County Durham (44.6) than regionally (36.7) and nationally (31.4 per 1,000 population).
- Over 1,500 children, young people and their families were supported through a weight management programme last year, which supports healthy eating and physical activity

Look out for:

- The Children, Young People and Families Plan which has been developed with input from local children, young people and their families.
- Development of a Healthy Weight Strategy for County Durham.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Improve support to families and children to develop healthy weight, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a healthy weight strategy which focuses on evidence to promote physical activity and a healthy diet by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing education and training on food growing clubs/allotments ○ Improving access to physical activity and encourage greater use of the natural environment • Implementing a healthy weight strategy delivery plan 	Director of Public Health County Durham	December 2014 March 2016 March 2016 March 2017
Improve support to women to start and continue to breastfeed their babies, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further developing peer support programmes to provide information and listening support in antenatal and postnatal periods, to increase the number of women who start and continue to breastfeed • Further developing the breastfeeding-friendly venues scheme with businesses, to enable women to breastfeed their babies more easily when outside of the home 	Director of Public Health County Durham	March 2015

Delivery of the Living Streets Project to promote and increase the numbers of children walking to school in traffic congested areas	Head of Transport and Contract Services	March 2015
Evaluate the 'baby clear' initiative to increase the uptake locally of stop smoking services for pregnant women.	Director of Public Health County Durham	March 2015
Work with partners to develop a single pathway for early intervention, by: Working with school nurses midwives and health visitors, in line with the Healthy Child Programme which offers immunisations, information and guidance on parenting and healthy choices	Director of Public Health County Durham	March 2017

2. Reduce health inequalities and early deaths

Although health in County Durham has improved over recent years and people now live longer lives, the rate of progress has not been equal across the county and health inequalities are still evident.

Health inequalities are affected by a number of complex issues such as lower household income levels, lower educational attainment levels and higher levels of unemployment. County Durham residents have higher rates of benefit claimants suffering from mental health or behavioural disorders.

Lifestyle choices remain a key area of focus to reduce premature deaths and many people in County Durham continue to make poor lifestyle choices when compared to England. Levels of adult obesity in County Durham are worse than the England average, and affect the least well off more. Alcohol is a significant contributor to ill-health across all age groups and all areas of the county. Rates of hospital stays for alcohol related harm remain significantly higher than the England average.

Local priorities for tackling these inequalities include reducing smoking, tackling obesity, promoting positive mental health and reducing early deaths from heart disease and cancer.

Going well

- 81.1% of eligible women were screened for cervical cancer in the 5 years to the end of March 2013; this exceeded the North East average (79.5%) and national target (80%).
- 38% of people in treatment with the community alcohol service between January and December 2012 successfully completed treatment, exceeding national performance of 36%.

Cause for concern

- The percentage of people with long term conditions, for example diabetes, coronary heart disease and stroke is higher than the England average.
- Adult obesity is increasing with 28.6% of the adult population now classed as obese compared to the England average of (24.2%).
- Alcohol specific hospital admission rates for men and women are higher than the England average.

Did you know?

- Since the beginning of the Health Check programme in October 2008, 84,349 people have had a NHS Health Check

Look out for:

- The Warm and Healthy Homes programme which aims to tackle excess winter mortality of people with a long term health condition by installing domestic energy efficiency measures resulting in warmer homes, lower fuel bills and a reduction in cold related illness.
- Further promotion of public health initiatives such as the Change4Life programme, NHS Health Checks, cancer awareness and screening programmes.
- A new wellbeing service to support people who have long term conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, lung disease and those who have had strokes.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Review the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to provide an overview of health and wellbeing needs in County Durham	Head of Planning & Service Strategy	March 2015
Review the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy to inform strategic commissioning for health and social care Clinical Commissioning Groups and the local authority	Head of Planning & Service Strategy	March 2015
Develop joint action plans with partners to reduce the number of people who have cancer, heart disease and strokes, by increasing public awareness and early diagnosis	Director of Public Health County Durham	March 2015
Work with partners to implement the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for County Durham, to reduce the harm caused by alcohol to individuals, families and communities by:	Director of Public Health County Durham	March 2015

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using social marketing techniques to raise awareness about the harms of alcohol Agreeing the best approaches to tackling alcohol related harm in pubs, other venues and places 		
Integrate existing interventions into the Warm and Healthy Homes Programme to address the impact of fuel poverty and target people who have a health condition	Director of Public Health County Durham	March 2015
Develop a Healthy Weight Alliance for County Durham and bring key elements of an obesity strategy together, by:	Director of Public Health County Durham	April 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a performance and reporting process in order to make relevant data available to all partners 		March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a shared communications plan for partners to provide information on activities-to improve accessibility and maximise opportunities for residents across the county 		March 2016
Work with partners to implement a County Durham Drugs Strategy, to prevent harm, restrict supply and build recovery within communities, by:	Director of Public Health County Durham	March 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using targeted approaches to raise awareness in County Durham of the harm caused by drugs Providing specific targeted training and education to support individuals, professionals, communities and families to address the harm caused by drugs 		

3. Improve the quality of life, independence and care and support for people with long term conditions

An increasingly older population will see rising prevalence of mental health conditions, dementia, increased levels of disability and long term conditions and will

significantly increase the number of people we need to provide care for, in both the health and care systems. Long term conditions have a significant impact on reducing the length and quality of a person's life. They also impact on family members who may act as carers.

Through the draft Care Bill, the government is changing the care and support system so that it focuses more clearly and fairly on people's wellbeing, supporting them to live independently for as long as possible. The care and support reforms aim to improve the experience of people needing care and support and also provide better support to carers. The government's Better Care Fund will contribute to local efforts to improve the integration of health and social care services, through the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board.

We continue to work towards mainstreaming self-directed support as the core model for assessment and service delivery for adults in need of social care services. Self-directed support enables people in need of services to have much more control over their assessment and care planning, and have greater choice and control over the services they receive to meet their assessed needs.

The reablement service continues to improve people's confidence and ability to regain their independence to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

We will continue to work with health partners to provide intermediate care services for people, which promote faster recovery from illness, prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and maximise independent living.

Going well

- Reablement services help to get people back on their feet after poor health or a period in hospital; following receipt of the reablement service, 62% of service users did not need any further ongoing care.
- 59.5% of service users have been provided with a personal budget to meet their adult social care needs; this is better than England (55.5%) and North East (52%) averages.

Cause for concern

- Locally, diabetes prevalence has risen from 3.9% in 2006/07 to 6.5% in 2011/12, placing a significant burden on local health care costs.
- Adult obesity is increasing with 28.6% of the adult population now classed as obese compared to the England average of 24.2%

Did you know?

- 94.3% of adult social care service users reported that the care, help and support they receive has made their quality of life better.
- The County Durham Dignity in Care scheme was shortlisted for the Great British Care Awards in May 2013; this is a system where there is zero tolerance of abuse and disrespect of adults - treating people as individuals and enabling them to maintain the maximum possible level of independence, choice and control over their own lives.

Look out for:

- The government's Care Bill becoming law in 2014, which will change the way in which care and support is provided

- Implementation of 'Deciding Right', a North-East initiative for making care decisions in advance to ensure that they are centred on the person and minimise the likelihood of unnecessary or unwanted treatment

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Work with the NHS to develop an out of hours call handling service for GPs and Emergency Departments to prevent inappropriate hospital admissions	Head of Transport & Contract Services	July 2014
Ensure consistent and effective application of eligibility criteria, through the assessment process, so that adult social care services continue to be provided to those people most in need	Head of Adult Care	March 2015
Develop guidance for frontline staff on outcome-focused models of care which will transform the way social care is delivered to service users	Head of Adult Care	March 2015
Ensure that eligible people have access to the reablement service to provide support to service users to help increase independence through the care management process	Head of Adult Care/ Head of Commissioning	March 2015
Review the Market Position Statement, which provides information to existing and potential service providers on local priorities for all service user groups	Head of Commissioning	March 2015

4. Improve mental and physical wellbeing of the population

In County Durham, improving the mental and physical wellbeing of the population has continued to remain a priority. Maintaining good mental wellbeing is very important to peoples' relationships, education, training, work and to individuals achieving their potential. Maintaining good physical wellbeing has a positive impact on the way a person feels in relation to their mental wellbeing. It is the foundation for wellbeing and the effective functioning of individuals and communities. Mental and physical wellbeing impact on how individuals think, feel, communicate and understand.

People at higher risk of suffering from poor mental health include those with poor educational attainment, the unemployed, older people, those with long term conditions (such as coronary heart disease, diabetes), people with learning disabilities and people living in more deprived communities.

It is recognised that maximising independence for people is an important contributor to positive mental health. It is also widely acknowledged that participation in work is one of the main routes to social inclusion and improving mental health and wellbeing. The financial and emotional burden of unemployment has a significant impact on mental health and wellbeing, and problems such as anxiety and depression impact on significant numbers of people out of work.

Going well

- There are 11 cafes in the county where people with dementia and their carers can meet, as well as talk to professionals for help, support and advice.

Cause for concern

- The number of people assessed with mental health needs in County Durham has increased by 31.3%.
- There are over 4,400 people in County Durham registered with GPs with a diagnosis of mental illness.
- Suicide rates in County Durham (11.5 per 100,000) were significantly higher than England (7.9 per 100,000) between 2009/11.

Did you know?

- Nationally life expectancy is on average 10 years lower for people with mental health problems due to poor physical health.
- At least one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their life.

Look out for:

- Implementation of the Mental Health Employment and Training Strategy, to help increase the number of people progressing into education, training, volunteering and employment.
- A Public Mental Health Strategy for County Durham

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Provide a wide range of physical activity opportunities across County Durham to support more active lifestyles, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the Physical Activity Delivery Plan, providing a greater range of opportunities to increase participation and activity levels in County Durham 	Director of Public Health County Durham	March 2015

- Developing and providing a community core offer for physical activity across the county, with additional targeted opportunities based on geography / health need

Work together to support people who have dementia to live in their own home for as long as possible and help them to maintain independence, by:

Head of Commissioning

March 2015

- Implementing the National Dementia Strategy and other national, regional and local dementia initiatives, including:
 - Early diagnosis
 - Support to remain independent
 - End of life care

Develop a culture and sport 'core offer' which defines the nature and scope of the new service area with individual implementation plans to be established, to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of local people

Head of Culture and Sport

April 2015

Develop and commission an adult wellbeing service within the 30% most deprived geographies of County Durham, to address the factors which influence health and wellbeing, by:

Director of Public Health
County Durham

April 2016

- Working in partnership to ensure that the social determinants of health, e.g. housing and employment, are embedded into the service
- Working in partnership with Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure that the adult wellbeing service is jointly commissioned, to support the population with long term conditions

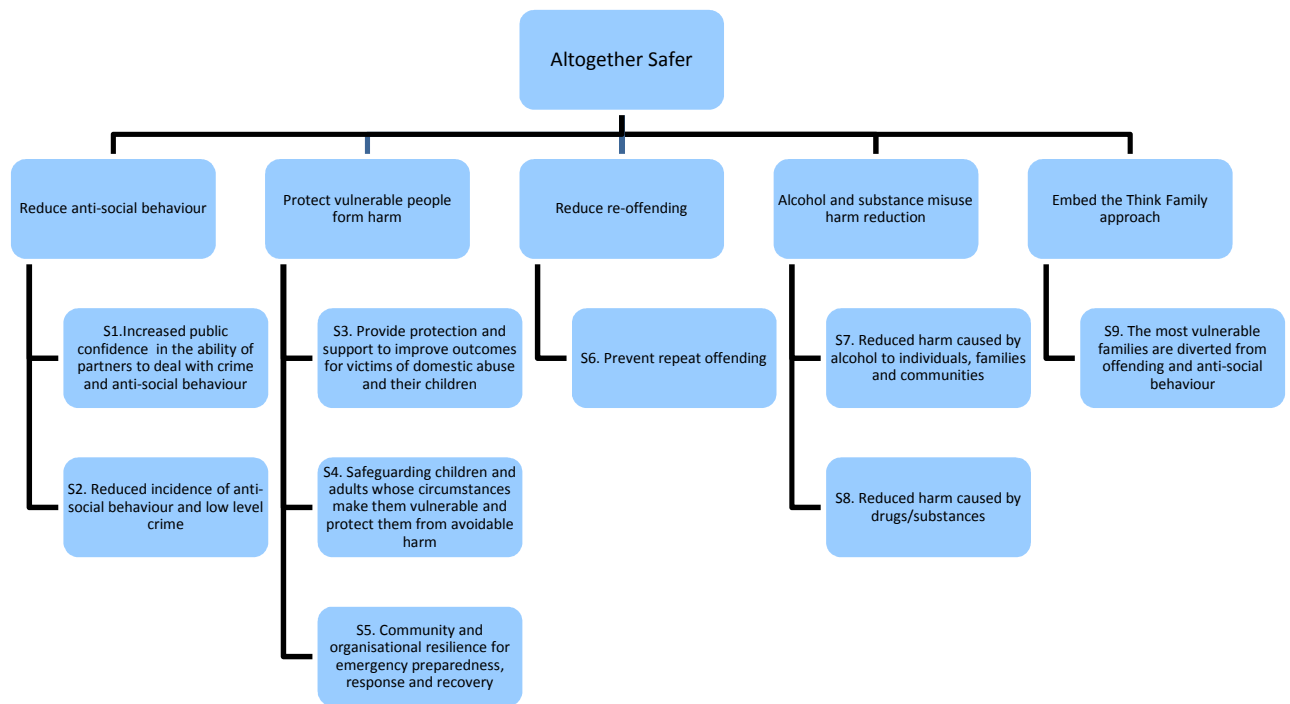
Work with partners to implement a multi-agency Public Mental Health Strategy, including suicide prevention, by:

Director of Public Health
County Durham

March 2017

- Promotion of positive mental health in partnership plans
- Providing early intervention for those who need it
- Helping people recover from episodes of mental ill health

Altogether Safer



The Altogether Safer theme focuses on creating a safer and more cohesive county and the council works with partner organisations, as a key member of the Safe Durham Partnership, to tackle crime and disorder in County Durham.

The Safe Durham Partnership Plan outlines progress in reducing anti-social behaviour, improving community safety and increasing public confidence. The council will continue to support the partnership in delivering on our shared priorities, building on achievements and working together to meet the challenges ahead.

Key hotspots around the county are identified as particularly vulnerable in terms of crime and disorder. These areas generally face problems such as unemployment, low educational attainment and ill-health. Evidence shows that there are links between levels of deprivation and levels of domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, re-offending and alcohol and substance misuse.

1. Reduce anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is associated with everyday problems such as noise, abandoned cars, vandalism, litter, intimidation and harassment. ASB can also affect people's happiness and pride in their community as a place to live and deters them from accessing local parks and other community spaces.

Despite progress made in tackling ASB, the public still perceive anti-social behaviour to be a problem. As a result, the council will work with the Safe Durham Partnership to improve the way in which partners capture and record complaints. It will also set out to tackle those specific issues the public have raised. These include: underage drinking; dealing / using drugs; dog fouling; rubbish lying around; and speeding.

Going well

- The number of incidents of ASB recorded by the police continued to reduce during 2012/13.
- 60% of respondents to the Crime Survey agreed that the local council and police are dealing with concerns of ASB and crime.

Cause for concern

- Despite progress made in tackling ASB, the public generally still perceive anti-social behaviour to be a problem.

Did you know?

- During 2012/13, crime in the county fell by 14%, anti-social behaviour fell by 24% and deliberate and not known secondary fires fell by 43%.

Look out for:

- Expansion of the use of Community Speedwatch campaigns across the county.
- Local campaigns to target littering and dog fouling, including the power to issue fixed penalty notices.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Review of key strategic documents, to determine priorities for the council and the Safe Durham Partnership:	Head of Planning & Service Strategy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe Durham Partnership Strategic Assessment 2014 to provide the evidence		November 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe Durham Partnership Plan refresh 2015 to provide the priorities and actions		June 2015

Work with responsible authorities to implement the anti-social behaviour and public confidence action plans for 2014/17, to respond to the areas of most concern to the public including underage drinking, dog fouling, litter and rubbish, and vehicle speeding to increase public confidence and to deliver a 'How Can I Get Involved?' publicity campaign	Head of Planning & Service Strategy	March 2015
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2. Protect vulnerable people from harm

Protecting vulnerable people from harm is a key priority for Durham County Council and partners through the Safe Durham Partnership. The priority includes effectively responding to, and better protecting, those vulnerable individuals and communities at most risk of serious harm, improving the safety of domestic abuse victims and their children, and reducing repeat incidents of domestic abuse.

Safeguarding children and adults continues to remain a key priority for Durham County Council and partners and a zero tolerance approach has been adopted through the delivery of comprehensive training and communication strategies, national drivers and media attention linked to the care services industry. This means that all agencies are fully committed to preventing the abuse of children and adults and responding promptly when abuse is suspected.

The County Durham Sexual Violence Strategy brings partners together to tackle sexual violence and the negative impact it has on individuals and families.

Durham County Council has a statutory duty, as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to provide an Emergency Response Service. The council is supported by Durham & Darlington Civil Contingencies Unit and other key voluntary agencies, to ensure that it provides organisational resilience and emergency preparedness, response and recovery arrangements through its Emergency Response Team.

Going well

- During 2012/13, the repeat domestic abuse victim rate was 12.6% against a national target of 25% or less.
- An Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services found that safeguarding partnership work was outstanding in County Durham.

Cause for concern

- In 2012/13, the majority of safeguarding referrals for alleged abuse refer to incidents which occurred in care homes and at the service user's home address.
- Sexual offences are under-reported in the county - the number of reported offences stands at 306 in comparison to the 2011/12 outturn of 333.

Did you know?

- Safeguarding adults' referrals in 2012/13 identify that physical abuse was the main type of adult abuse recorded.
- The numbers of adults accessing outreach support from domestic abuse services have increased year on year, with 1,605 adults accessing support during 2010/11 and 2,373 during 2012/13 – an overall increase of 47.8%.

Look out for:

- Awareness-raising campaigns on hate crime, which will help people to understand how to recognise and report it.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Ensure that the Safeguarding Adults Board implements the requirements of the draft Care Bill, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revising the terms of reference to ensure that they are fit for purpose.• Reviewing the annual reporting and business reporting processes	Head of Adult Care	March 2015
Work with responsible authorities to implement the Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for 2014-17, to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse in County Durham by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• increasing awareness of services and the public• providing training to increase referrals• taking action to reduce the risk of victim and bring perpetrators to justice	Head of Planning & Service Strategy	March 2015
Building Community resilience to Emergencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop approach and methodology for the development of community resilience plans in communities where demand exists	Head of Policy and Communications	October 2014

- Working with local communities develop and ensure Community Resilience plans are in place, including training in relation to activation of plan.

April 2017

Building organisational resilience of the Council to business interruptions:

Head of Policy and Communications

- Corporate Business Continuity Plan in place.

April 2015

3. Reduce re-offending

The government objective for reducing crime and re-offending encourages a focus on society's most prolific and problematic offenders. The Safe Durham Partnership will continue to prioritise the effective management of offenders, who are identified as committing a disproportionate amount of crime and harm in their local communities.

Going well

- During 2012/13, offences committed by young people fell by 18.1% compared to 2011/12 and the number of young people offending fell by 17.3%.
- The Integrated Offender Management programme is well established and continues to achieve significant reductions in adult re-offending, with a current reduction of 58%.
- Support into employment and successful engagement with the Recovery Academy in Durham is helping offenders find work and live a drug-free life.

Cause for concern

- The scope of re-offending work has been increased from reducing prolific offending to reducing all proven offending by adults and juveniles; the Safe Durham Partnership will need to provide a clear profile of all such offending and identify those types which are most prevalent.

Did you know?

- In 2013, the County Durham Youth Offending Service won the 'Youth Justice Award' for the third time in four years with their Intensive Employability Programme, which helps young people with lengthy criminal records to make new lives for themselves.

Look out for:

- Work to further increase victim involvement with young people is to be rolled out across the county.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Refresh the Reducing Re-offending Strategy and develop and implement a new action plan, to include delivering projects aimed at women offenders, restorative approaches, transforming rehabilitation, offender mental health, and health needs of young people who offend	Head of Children's Services	March 2015

4. Alcohol and substance misuse harm reduction

Alcohol and Substance misuse contributes to a significant proportion of crime and anti-social behaviour, with links to both organised crime and child sexual exploitation. Underage drinking and drugs in the community are in the top three issues which the public in county Durham want tackling.

Despite a rise in alcohol-related violent crime and alcohol-related domestic violence in 2011/12, levels have fallen back below those in 2010/11. During 2012/13, the number of anti-social behaviour incidents related to alcohol remained stable at just over 16%.

During 2011/12 there were 1,738 drug users in effective treatment and 1,758 people in treatment with the community alcohol service. The percentage of all exits from alcohol treatment which are planned discharges stand at 64%. The percentage of drug users in treatment who successfully completed treatment during 2011/12 was 10.8%.

Going well

- 38% of people in treatment with the community alcohol service between January and December 2012 successfully completed their treatment plan; this is better than the national average of 36%.
- Between April and September 2013, the number of women experiencing domestic abuse who were re-referred to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference is 7.8%; this is significantly better than the England average of 24%.

Cause for concern

- Alcohol misuse is strongly linked to crime and anti-social behaviour and performance data for 2012/13 shows that 32% of violent crimes are alcohol related.
- The public's perception of alcohol and drug-related nuisance remains high and this will be a key focus for the Safe Durham Partnership in 2014.

Did you know?

- As part of a project targeting youth-related alcohol nuisance in parts of the county, 30 licensees received responsible retailer training.
- The number of people completing substance misuse treatment is increasing – criminal justice clients make up 20% of the treatment population and of these 11.7% completed treatment.

Look out for:

- The partnership will focus on young people drinking; this will include public places and standardising the level of alcohol seizures across the county.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Work with responsible authorities to implement the 'prevention and control' element of the Alcohol Harm Reduction Delivery Plan, to reduce the impact of alcohol related disorder in targeted areas across the county by improving data and intelligence, raising awareness of alcohol harm	Head of Planning & Service Strategy	March 2015
Work with responsible authorities to develop and deliver the new County Durham Drug Strategy and action plan for 2014/17 by strengthening restorative approaches as part of recovery and rehabilitation and increasing awareness in order to reduce drug use, reduce drug related incidents and provide public reassurance	Head of Planning & Service Strategy	March 2015
Work with partners to deliver a range of intelligence led interventions to reduce the harm caused by alcohol	Head of Environmental Health & Consumer Protection	March 2015

5. Embed a 'Think Family' Approach

'Think Family' is a multi-agency approach which seeks to provide early intervention for those families which have problems and cause problems to the community around them, putting high costs on the public sector.

The Safe Durham Partnership and the council has adopted this approach in order to provide families with the best possible opportunity to avoid involvement in crime and disorder and reduce their impact on our services. Achieving our targets will have financial benefits and will present social benefits for those areas of the county where communities suffer most.

In County Durham, we also use this approach as part of our 'Stronger Families' programme, known nationally as Troubled Families, which provides support to families in the county experiencing problems or difficulties, including those who:

- have children who don't attend school or who are excluded;
- are involved in antisocial behaviour or crime (including Domestic Abuse);

- are not in work; and
- result in high cost services such as families with children on the child protection list, families affected by parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental health problems.

The Think Family approach joins up local services, dealing with each family's problems as a whole and using a range of methods to support families and challenge poor behaviour. The approach also builds on the 'High Impact Household' programme adopted by the Safe Durham Partnership and the council in 2011.

Going well

- 312 families have been 'turned around' in the first ten months of 2013; this means 60% less anti-social behaviour and 33% less offending by minors in those families.
- The Safe Durham Partnership and Durham County Council are fully committed to embedding the 'Think Family' approach across local initiatives and problem-solving groups; the anti-social behaviour escalation policy and mental health protocols are examples of how we can intervene early.

Cause for concern

- Maintaining significant and continuous reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour can only be achieved by building on what works and being able to adapt the way we approach problems.

Did you know?

- Our offender management programme will benefit from additional engagement with families of offenders, so that services can be designed around the issues they raise.

Look out for:

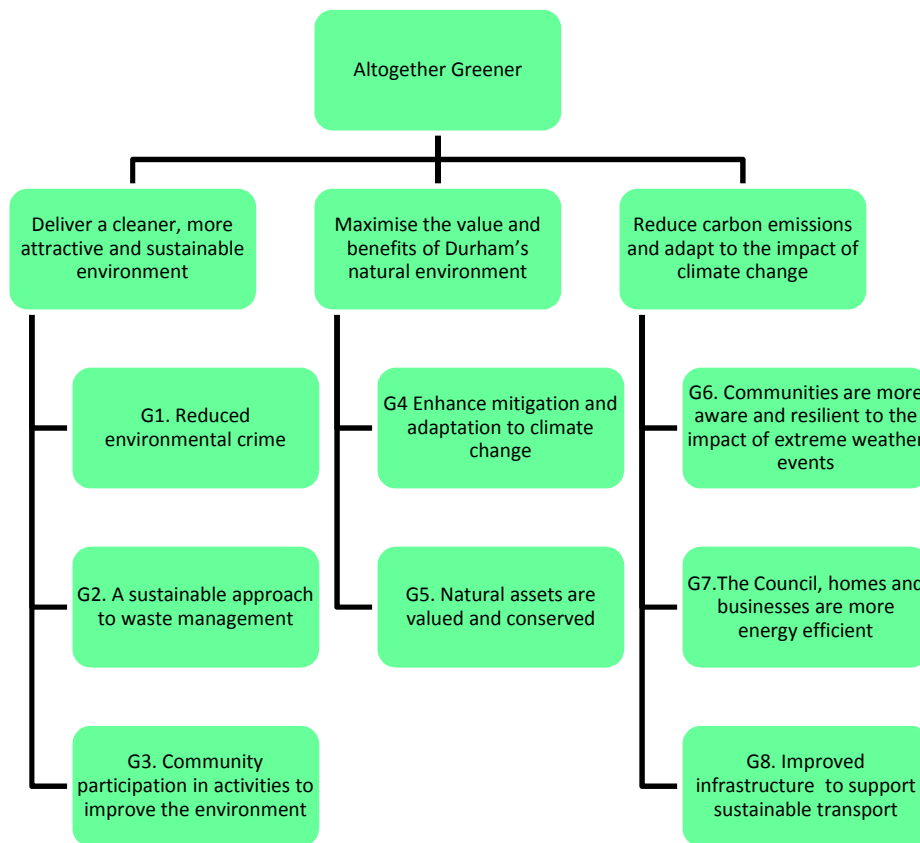
- Improved domestic abuse services, which will be able to draw on additional support networks as part of the 'Think Family' approach.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Embed the Think Family approach, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training staff in restorative approaches for early intervention when working with families • Incorporating 'Think Family' when managing offenders and domestic abuse services by working with the whole family rather than individuals in isolation 	Head of Planning & Service Strategy	March 2015

- Integrating Think Family into Multi Agency Partnership (MAP) processes so all partnerships understand the processes to support the family

Altogether Greener



Each objective is underpinned by a number of outcomes and we recognise there are cross-cutting issues and complex relationships across the theme. We also recognise that the Altogether Greener theme interlinks with other priority altogether themes and contributes to the wider determinants of health.

We accept that to be truly successful in this area, we must harness the contribution that everyone can make and we are committed to supporting and working in partnership with both the community and the voluntary sector, involving all in the decisions that affect them.

1. Deliver a cleaner, more attractive and sustainable environment

The appearance of our local communities plays an important role in many aspects of our daily lives and the quality of our public spaces, both perceived and actual. It is a major influence for residents when determining which areas they intend to use, in what capacity and when. Well maintained streets, free from litter, dog fouling, graffiti and fly-tipping, and attractive, inviting green spaces that are not blighted by dumped rubbish and abandoned vehicles, are consistently ranked as important to our residents.

However, an attractive environment is not solely about the council improving its operations. To be truly effective and sustainable we need to harness the contribution that everyone can make. For this reason, we will continue to both support and work with our communities, partner organisations and the voluntary

sector to ensure our local environment is clean, attractive and shaped around community needs.

The new contracts that we have put in place in deal with the disposal of our waste have resulted in over 70% of waste calculated across the county being diverted away from landfill. We believe sending rubbish to landfill is not sustainable for a number of environmental, financial and practical reasons and we support the principle that it is better to minimise the amount of waste being produced and to recycle materials into new products before resorting to any other treatment method.

We are committed to delivering improved recycling and waste management services tailored to our local circumstances and based on principles of sustainable living. We accept that there will always be materials that can't be recycled and whenever possible we will divert these materials from landfill and instead use to generate energy.

Going well

- Delivery of successful initiatives to tackle environmental issues, including high profile campaigns and 'weeks in action'.
- The percentage of household waste collected from the kerbside and recycled has continued to increase since the introduction of Alternate Weekly Collection.
- Many local environmental improvements have been made by working with our communities including:
 - 14 of our parks and open spaces have been awarded green flag status; the highest of all local authorities in the North East. Eight of these related to our cemeteries and crematoria.
 - Durham City was awarded a gold award and Chester-le-Street a silver award in the 'large town' category of Northumbria in Bloom Awards 2013.
 - Sunderland Bridge was successful in the 'best small village' category and Brandon Village Community Association in 'best group horticultural project' category of Beautiful Durham Awards 2013.

Cause for concern

- An increase in fly-tipping incidents.
- High levels of contamination within household recyclate collected from the kerbside, primarily pet waste, nappies and food waste.
- Waste volumes have decreased year on year, partly due to the economic climate. If economic recovery is accompanied by an increase in the volume of waste then there will be pressure on service delivery.

Did you know?

- We generate enough renewable electricity from the gas produced by old landfills to power more than 2,000 homes each year.
- We have the power to ensure householders keep their gardens and yards tidy: during 2013/14 we cleared 2,500 gardens and yards that were classed as in a 'poor state'.
- We have introduced a 'Litter Awareness Programme': first time enviro-crime offenders (aged 10-17 years) will have the option of attending a 90 minute educational session and litter pick as an alternative to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

- We can introduce a number of measures at hot-spot locations for fly-tipping. This can range from barriers to physically prevent people from entering the location to installing covert CCTV cameras to identify and prosecute offenders.
- During the 2013 Big Spring Clean, 1397 volunteers gave up a combined 2,106 hours to collect 1,086 bags of rubbish at 85 locations.

Look out for:

- The opportunity to participate in Altogether Greener Week 2014, incorporating World Environment Day (June).
- Projects and individuals nominated for an Environment Award (October 2014). Categories include volunteering (under 18, over 18 and group) as well as community participation.
- Environmental campaigns in your area including:
 - Local litter picks
 - Dog fouling campaign (February 2014).
 - Big Spring Clean (April - May 2014)
 - Litter from cars campaign (August 2014)
- The opportunity to run a community allotment, e-mail civicpride@durham.gov.uk for details.
- Your new collection calendar for garden waste which will run between 18 March and 7 November in agreed collection areas.

High Level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Produce a new Waste Management Strategy for County Durham	Head of Projects & Business Services	June 2014
Deliver the Waste Transfer Stations Capital Improvement Programme:	Head of Projects & Business Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annfield Plain, Stanley • Heighington Lane, Newton Aycliffe • Stainton Grove, Barnard Castle • Thornley (demolish and rebuild) 		December 2014 December 2014 December 2014 March 2015
Increase community ownership and involvement in the management of allotments	Head of Direct Services	December 2014
Host the 25th Environment Awards.	Head of Planning & Assets	December 2014
Through the Community Action Team (CAT), deliver a programme of targeted interventions around environment, health and consumer protection	Head of Environment, Health & Consumer Protection	March 2015

Reduce incidents of environmental crime through targeted activity delivered jointly with Social Landlords within locality 'hotspots' using high profile campaigns and organised events.	Head of Direct Services	December 2015
Develop a Waste Transfer Station Strategy and action plan to maximise their potential	Head of Projects & Business Services	March 2016
Develop and implement the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) provision plan	Head of Projects & Business Services	September 2016

2. Maximise the value and benefits of Durham's natural environment

Not only is there evidence that communities with shared natural areas demonstrate more social interaction and vibrancy but also that well managed green environments can provide significant social benefits, for example, deterring crime and anti-social behaviour (contact with nature has been shown to reduce aggressive behaviour) or aiding the recovery of hospital patients (if the patient has access to views of nature). The natural environment is an ideal place to take exercise and it has been noted that higher levels of physical activity exist within those communities that have access to natural space. For those walking outdoors, exercise becomes a secondary motivation as it is surpassed by the attraction and enjoyment of contact with nature.

By utilising the benefits of the natural environment we can increase the resilience of our communities to extreme weather events. As eco-systems absorb roughly half of all man-made carbon emissions, peatlands, wetlands, soil, forests and water all play a crucial role in adapting to and mitigating against climate change.

Going well

- We created 10 new community woodlands (covering a total area of 350 acres) in 2012 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. (in partnership with the Woodland Trust)
- We are proposing to create three new woodlands near Castleside and improve the management of ancient woodlands near Allensford as part of the Heritage Lottery funded 'Land of Oak and Iron' project.
- We will be carrying out major thinning and management works on a number of other woodlands in the coming years, mostly conifer plantations on former colliery reclamation sites, to improve their amenity and wildlife value.
- The number of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), under the control of DCC or managed by partners, in positive conservation management

Cause for concern

- Inability to influence those Local Wildlife Sites not under the our control
- Fragmentation and poor condition of parts of our woodland resource.

Did you know?

- Incidents of environmental anti-social behaviour along the coastline can be reported via a hotline.
- Every Tuesday and Wednesday, a group of volunteers (Volunteer Countryside Rangers) contribute to the protection and enhancement of our coast and countryside by picking litter, clearing gorse, keeping footpaths open, managing magnesian limestone and woodland habitats, looking after wetland areas and improving animal habitats. New recruits are always welcome (details are available on the DCC website).
- 'Country Durham', the newsletter of our Countryside Service, is available from the DCC website. It contains details of sites, events, walks and volunteering opportunities throughout the County.
- Viewing platforms have been installed at Crime Rigg, Thrislington, Old Quarrington and Coxhoe (Raisby) quarries. We have also created a fossil hunting bay at Cassop Primary school, where pupils and visitors can hunt for fossil fish in the famous marl slate.

Look out for:

- Wildflower planting on selected verges and open spaces across the county (March and September)
- Poppies along the central verge of the A691 between County Hall and the DLI Museum to commemorate World War 1
- Projects nominated for an Environment Award (October 2014) in the 'Natural Environment' category.
- The Heathland and Open Habitat Mosaics project in Derwentside (winter 2014)
- Our 'Guided Walks Programme' which details more than 130 walks, including specialist walks that incorporate art and photography, and family walks (little legs, big fun) which incorporate scavenger hunts, games and quizzes along the route (<http://www.durham.gov.uk/Pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=468>)
- Changes at Wharton Park. The £2.2 million refurbishment will include a visitor centre and extension, play equipment upgrade, trim track, climbing wall and improvements to the amphitheatre.
- Information panels at each quarry viewing platform (see above) and the availability of downloadable information booklets for each site. Once this work has been completed, we will organise school visits and community visits to the sites.

High Level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Establish a carbon reduction baseline and subsequent targets for 2014 onwards in relation to the new Waste Service contracts	Head of Projects and Business Services	
• Baseline		August 2014
• Targets		June 2015

3. Reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change

One consequence of climate change is a likely increase in extreme weather events, e.g. flooding, heatwaves, storms, subsidence and water-shortage. With a changing climate and predictions of wetter winters, warmer summers and greater frequencies of extreme weather, it is important that local communities are able to interpret these headline warnings, understand the likely impacts to themselves and prepare appropriately.

One of the major contributors to climate change is carbon dioxide (CO₂) and there are many ways in which we, our communities and local businesses can reduce the amount of CO₂ produced.

Increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings will not only reduce CO₂ but will also provide a financial saving. Choice of transport is another major factor relevant to reducing CO₂ emissions. Developing and delivering practical, cost-effective initiatives that enable many more people to travel by foot, bike or public transport will positively influence our carbon footprint.

Going well

- The Street Lighting Energy Reduction Programme to replace or retrofit 41,000 lamps with Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) is underway. The result will be fewer harmful emissions, a reduction of 7,500 tonnes of energy each year and a financial saving of £24 million over the next 25 years.
- We have reduced carbon emissions by 787 tonnes per year by carrying out a number of improvements at four of our most popular and high energy consuming buildings. Crook Civic Centre, Stanley Indoor Bowls Centre, Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre and Chester-le-Street Leisure Centre have been made more energy efficient through the installation of combined heat and power, lighting upgrades, building management systems, insulation, boiler optimisation and ventilation upgrades.
- County Durham has the highest uptake of energy efficiency installation measures in homes in the North East and between 2008 and 2013, the energy efficiency of more than 54,000 homes was improved.

Cause for concern

- Increase in severe weather events, including prolonged winter snow, heavy rain storms, high winds and the impact of these changes.
- Increased demand on service delivery due to climate changes. For example increased verge/weed maintenance, gully cleansing.

Did you know?

- Leisure centres at Teesdale and Spennymoor have been fitted with solar photovoltaic panels.
- Free energy efficiency heating improvements, including gas boiler replacements, are available to eligible households as part of the Warm Up North scheme.

- An Archimedes Screw hydroelectric power system, capable of generating about 75 per cent of the energy requirements of the 8,000 square metres of office space, is being installed at Freeman’s Reach in Durham City.
- The Oakenshaw Wind Turbine, jointly managed by the landowner and Oakenshaw Community, will result in up to £800,000 being invested in the local community.

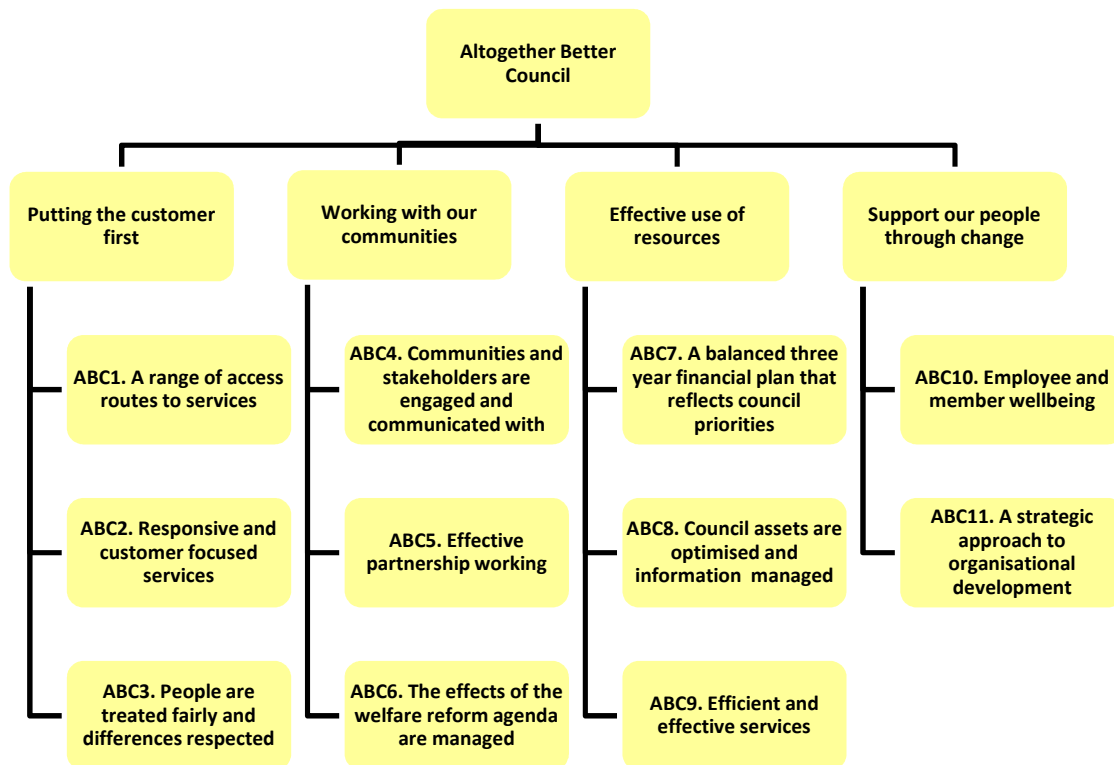
Look out for:

- Projects nominated for an Environment Award (October 2014) in the ‘Climate Change category.
- The ‘Warm Up North’ scheme which will provide grants for households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes

High Level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Deliver the Clean Bus Technology project across Durham City	Head of Transport & Contract Services	September 2014
Deliver the Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project over 6 years from 1 April 2013 to 31st March 2019	Head of Technical Services	March 2017
Prepare an Air Quality Action Plan for Durham City and identify a range of required actions to improve air quality and to meet specific air quality objectives	Head of Environment, Health & Consumer Protection	March 2015
Deliver the Warm Up North project across County Durham to improve domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency across County Durham	Head of Planning and Assets	March 2017
Implementation of the Climate Change Strategy to achieve the County Durham carbon reductions of 40% by 2020 and 55% by 2031 – March 2017	Head of Planning and Assets	March 2017

Altogether Better Council



The Altogether Better Council priority theme looks at those things that enable us to effectively manage change and deliver improvement across the other themes within this plan. Our plans in this area are structured round four key objectives of serving our customers effectively, working with our communities, using our resources in an effective manner and supporting both councillors and employees through change. These are important areas and they relate to all services within the council. Achieving these objectives is increasingly important in times of significant change.

1. Putting the customer first

Providing good customer service remains of paramount importance. This is why we have revised our Customer First Strategy to reflect changing needs. Residents and customers pay for the services that we deliver through their taxes and through fees and charges. We need to understand what services our customers want from their local council and ensure that they have a say in the shaping of services delivered to them. Increasingly, people want to do their business with the council at a time and place which is convenient to them. Many people are comfortable with booking tickets for the cinema, paying bills or reporting a fault online either using a computer or through their mobile phone. It is more cost effective for the council and the customer to divert much of the business transacted with customers to online delivery channels. The council's new Customer First Strategy will set out how we intend to further improve how we deliver services to our customers.

Going well ↻

- We have added 25 more venues to the current 1000 buildings in County Durham listed on the DisabledGo website www.disabledgo.com including access information for disabled residents and visitors.

- New Customer Access Point including a library service, at the Witham, Barnard Castle.
- Joint working with Cestria Housing, resulting in a co-located Customer Access Point in Chester-le-Street town centre.

Cause for concern

- Some key council services still cannot be accessed online.
- Increased demand for some services as a result of the economic downturn and changes to the welfare system.

Did you know?

- Each year our Customer Services Team, answer more than one million telephone enquiries and deal with almost 333,000 face to face enquiries.
- You can apply for housing benefit or council tax support online.
- You can report potholes, blocked drains and street lighting issues online through our website.

Look out for:

- Our new Customer First Strategy.
- Ongoing quarterly editions of County Durham News and the annual service guide.
- Web-based search and pay facility for bereavement records (including grave, burial and headstone information).
- E-billing for council tax and business rates bills.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Adoption of new Customer First Strategy	Head of Projects and Business Services	July 2014
Improved customer access to online services		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New website to improve access to customer information and services 		May 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the way in which we capture data from our customers in order to streamline service delivery and develop better customer insight 		September 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase online transactions 		Dec 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it easier for customers to contact the council by reducing telephone numbers through an integrated approach 		March 2017

<p>Improve complaints reporting and monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Corporate Complaints Pilots to inform revised process • Improved Customer Complaints process 	<p>Head of Policy & Communications</p>	<p>June 2014</p> <p>March 2015</p>
<p>Strengthen integration of equality and diversity requirements to support effective decision making by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the process to ensure that equality and diversity implications are considered in all procurement and commissioning contracts • Ensuring that decisions relating to making future financial savings take account of the impact on those groups protected under equality legislation 	<p>Head of Planning and Performance</p>	<p>Sept 2014</p> <p>March 2015</p>

2. Working with our communities

Effective engagement with local residents has been a major focus for Durham County Council since local government reorganisation. Our 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) across the county are key to achieving this. To date, just under £21 million has been awarded to local communities through AAPs, attracting an additional £34 million in matched funding. As a council we believe that it is important to involve communities in making major decisions on the future of local services and let people have a say about their local communities. Our nationally recognised work on participatory budgeting through the 'Your Money, Your Choice' events held in 2013 involved nearly 10,700 people, allocating £449,000 to 120 projects. Over 3,300 people participated in our consultation on the council's budget with 1,300 taking part in our financial prioritisation exercise. The public have also played a major part in deciding on the future of a range of services from community buildings to leisure centres.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 heralded some of the largest policy changes introduced by the current government. Areas with a history of heavy industry have a larger proportion of the population with a disability and who are dependent on benefits. The government's welfare reforms have had a significant impact on County Durham. The council has been working in partnership with housing providers and the voluntary and community sector to help residents most affected by the changes to the benefits system.

The government's reductions in public sector spending have meant that we have had to make large spending reductions across our whole range of services. Other public sector organisations have also been affected by the savings requirements. In these times it has been critical to maintain a focus on effective partnership working, in particular working through the County Durham Partnership to ensure continued integrated delivery of public

services across the county. It is also important that we protect insofar as possible vulnerable people. We continue to assess the potential impact of all our spending plans on those people whose characteristics are protected by equalities legislation and identify what we can do to reduce these impacts.

Going well 👍

- Our ongoing work with the voluntary sector and local Town and Parish Councils.
- Over 10,000 voted in the 'Your Money, Your Choice' participatory budgeting exercises, allocating £449,000 to 120 community projects.
- Just over 3,300, or about one in three people, also gave us their views on our medium term financial plan including 1,300 who took part in the financial prioritisation game.

Cause for concern 🗨️

- County Durham has a high proportion of low income and benefit dependent families and is therefore more affected than other parts of the country by changes to the welfare system.
- Government spending reductions mean that financial support for voluntary and community groups will have to be continually reviewed like all areas of council spending.

Did you know?

- We have 14 Area Action Partnerships covering the whole county. These are used by the council to engage with residents. Anyone can get involved. More information is available at www.durham.gov.uk
- Any member of the public can take part in our online consultations through our website. Last year we ran consultation exercises on a range of issues including street lighting, garden waste collections, taxis in Durham city, school crossing patrols, provision of play parks and the council's budget.
- We staged 20 'Your Money, Your Choice' consultation events across the county, working with parish councils and the community and voluntary sector through our network of 14 Area Action Partnerships.
- We were short-listed for Council of the Year in Local Government Chronicle Awards 2014

Look out for:

- The new Sustainable Community Strategy 2014 – 2030 setting out the County Durham Partnership and Council's long term vision for the county, to be published in April 2014.
- The new look Durham County Council website which will go live in April 2014.
- World War I Centenary project – interactive map of commemorative sites and information.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Support better use of community buildings and the wider asset transfer approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain agreement for council owned community buildings to asset transfer, close or formally agree alternative individual building strategies with Cabinet 	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	December 2014
Improve partnership working with the VCS and Town and Parish Councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree a volunteering action plan to improve co-ordination and outcomes for volunteers, clients and host organisations Develop on-the-shelf projects for VCS funding. Promote increased input of Town and Parish Councils in participatory budgeting exercises and Asset transfer programmes for community facilities 	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	May 2014 October 2014 March 2015
Increase the level of external funding attracted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a community led local development structure to maximise involvement of AAPs to increase resources for local actions Review current approach to use of AAP resources to maximise degree of matched funding 	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	Sept 2014 Sept 2014

Completion and monitoring of all risk and project plans, and compliance with the Electoral Commission's performance standards for the following elections:	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union Elections • Parliamentary Elections 		June 2014 May 2015
Individual Electoral Registration Prepare to implement Individual Electoral Registration in line with government guidance and deadlines	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	December 2014
Work with communities to commemorate the centenary of WWI 2014-2018 by developing a programme of events in partnership with AAP's.	Head of Culture and Sport	March 2015
Review of the Local Council tax Support Scheme for 2015/16: Undertake a review of the LCTSS adopted 01 April 2013 and extended into 2014/15	Head of Finance (Financial Services)	March 2015
Programme manage a series of projects and activities to ensure that the changes identified through the Welfare Reform Act 2012 are fully understood, administered effectively and communicated to residents, stakeholders and other specific groups	Head of Policy and Communications	March 2015

3. Effective use of resources

Like all public services, we have had to plan for and cope with a shrinking public purse since 2010. Against an initial plan to save £125 million over four years, from 2011 we have delivered just under £114 million by 31 March 2014 and are on track to meet our target. In line with our strategy, 64 percent of savings have been made from non-frontline services and 29 percent through rationalising management. Our plans have been informed by extensive public consultation in 2010 and again recently in 2013. Balancing the books has meant taking some tough decisions such as on the restructuring of residential care, waste management, refuse collection, home to school transport, libraries and indoor leisure provision. We have worked with communities to protect them as far as possible from funding reductions. Five leisure facilities have been transferred into community ownership and we are currently at an advanced stage in transferring 120 community buildings too.

Recent government announcements show that it is unlikely that there will be any let-up in funding reductions in the foreseeable future. We will continue to plan for and manage any further changes as required.

Going well

- The council has delivered or is on track to achieve savings identified in our financial plans for 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14
- The council continue to develop sub-county information to better understand the local communities and help identify and tackle disadvantage and target resources.
- Our accounting systems continue to be improved to provide more user friendly financial information to allow service managers to manage their own budgets.
- Processing performance in the Benefits Team and in-year recovery rates for council tax, business rates, and sundry debts are all improving.
- The statutory value for money conclusion made by our auditors identified that the council has robust arrangements in place to secure financial resilience.
- The county and Parish elections held in May 2013 were well managed.

Cause for concern

- Evidence has been presented to the government showing that local authorities with greater levels of deprivation have had to face greater funding reductions than more affluent areas. Despite this, the funding formula for local government has not been changed for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial settlements.

Did you know?

- We successfully handled 1,368 requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations over the last year.
- Our ICT Service supports over 30,000 desktops for internal and external customers, over 1000 servers and over 800 buildings.
- The council manages £2bn of investments on behalf of the Durham County Council Pension Fund.
- The council's ICT service brings in £6million worth of income from external customers.
- The council is the largest social landlord in Durham with owning around 40% of all social properties generating £60m rental income.
- There are 236,000 residential properties in County Durham with a gross Council tax liability of £266m and over 80% are in the lowest bands A to C.

Look out for:

- Quarterly corporate performance reports to Cabinet, setting out latest information on the council's performance.
- Digital Durham, an ambitious programme to provide superfast broadband access to all homes, businesses and communities, starts in spring 2014.
- On-line access to Council Tax Accounts, Business Rates Benefits and e-billing, e-reminder functionality from April 2014.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Develop the 2015-2016 -2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP 5)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordination of Service Grouping proposals for additional MTFP savings and Capital Bidding 	Head of Finance (Corporate Finance) /Head of Policy & Communications/Head of Finance (Financial Services)	October 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse and report upon the impact of Budget announcements and Finance Settlements 	Head of Finance (Corporate Finance)	April 2014 & December 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to deliver robust monitoring of delivery of MTFP savings programme 	Head of Policy & Communications	Quarterly through to March 2017
Improve data protection arrangements regarding customer data sharing:	Head of Planning and Performance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rolling programme of data protection audits, eg, records storage and procurement clauses. 		May 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the use of Privacy Impact Assessments for regular data sharing. 		March 2015
Deliver and complete the current accommodation programme for council buildings	Head of Economic Development & Housing	November 2015

4. Support our people through change

The Authority is continuing to undergo significant change in relation to the workforce over the medium term, due to the challenge we face in having to find savings as a result of reductions in government grant support. The council's original estimate in 2011 of 1,950 reductions in posts by the end of 2014/15 is still expected to be accurate. Further work will be carried out over the forthcoming year to estimate the impact of further reductions on posts up to 2016/17.

Expressions of interest in early retirement, voluntary redundancy and flexible working continue to be invited from all employees from across the council in order to minimise the impact on compulsory redundancies in meeting the significant savings that are required. We will continue to engage with the workforce in helping us to manage and implement the necessary changes, alongside developing strategic workforce development plans that can support the development of skills and capacity in a continually changing workforce, in order to support the future needs of the organisation over this period.

Going well

- An induction programme successfully delivered to all newly elected councillors.
- The Durham Manager programme was successfully launched.
- Introduction of an Attendance Management Framework across the council to effectively manage sickness absence.
- Continued reduction in the number of accidents and health and safety reportable incidents.

Cause for concern

- Reductions in organisational capacity together with increasing levels of demand for many council services.
- Industrial relations in the light of continuing budget reductions.

Did you know?

- Since the launch of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing policy, approximately 50 line managers have accessed the Managers Competency Indicator Tool (MCIT) to assist with management of stress in the workplace.

Look out for:

- Changes to Local Government Pension Scheme affecting 17,000 employees.
- A new Council Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy launched in Feb/Mar 2014.

High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>Workforce Development Planning: Develop a strategic approach towards workforce development planning that ensures adequate support for managers in relation to progressing planned MTFP savings and meeting future business needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernise process for management of starters/leavers and changes 	<p>Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development</p>	<p>Sept 2014</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify critical roles and occupational groupings and put plans in place to ensure that the potential to recruit in these areas is increased 	<p>Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development</p>	<p>March 2016</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and promote existing policies and initiatives that support effective workforce management i.e. Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy, Establishment Control 	<p>Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development</p>	<p>March 2016</p>
<p>Improve the level and quality of appraisals undertaken across the council with a view to increasing individual and organisational performance</p>	<p>Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development</p>	<p>March 2015</p>
<p>Improving Attendance (By reducing sickness absence) Provide support to services and implement actions to improve attendance and the management of sickness absence and associated costs.</p>	<p>Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development</p>	<p>March 2015</p>

Appendix 1 will include a corporate basket of performance indicators that are currently being reviewed and will be incorporated into the plan prior to Full Council.

MTFP BUDGET SAVING 2014/2015

ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Saving Ref	Description	2014/2015
		£
ACE3	Management Review within ACE	300,300
ACE9	Review Partnership Support	35,745
ACE14	Review of the Civil Contingencies Unit	4,439
ACE25.1	Use of cash limit	69,992
TOTAL ACE		410,476

CHILDREN AND ADULTS SERVICES

Saving Ref	Description	2014/2015
		£
CAS1	Review of in-house social care provision	890,000
CAS2	Eligibility criteria - consistent and effective use of existing criteria and reablement	1,875,000
CAS3	Review adult social care charging	500,000
CAS4	Savings resulting from purchasing new stairlifts with extended warranties	40,000
CAS5	Management and support services, staffing restructures and service reviews/rationalisation	5,244,826
CAS6	Review of all non-statutory services	1,105,000
CAS7	Music Service to become self financing	91,000
CAS8	Outdoor education to rationalise and become self-financing (or close if not feasible)	60,000
CAS9	Review of Children's Care Services	1,208,439
CAS10	Review home to school / college transport policies	1,300,000
CAS 11	Use of Cash Limit	1,879,000
CAS11	Adjustment for previous years use of cash limit	-1,763,415
TOTAL CAS		12,429,850

NEIGHBOURHOODS SERVICE

Saving Ref	Description	2014/2015
		£
NS1	Review of Sport and Leisure	100,000
NS3	Structural reviews and more efficient ways of working	1,298,572
NS4	Review of Grounds and Countryside Maintenance	195,602
NS5	Waste Collection Savings	103,500
NS6	Waste Disposal Savings	95,200
NS11	Review of Technical Services / School Crossing Patrols / Street Lighting	684,974
NS17	Additional income from review of charges	200,139
NS24	Review of Heritage and Culture	203,500
NS25	Review of Library Service	327,626
MIT	Mitigating savings for delay in Leisure/culture saving	566,374
NS29	Use of Cash Limit	130,000
NS29	Cash limit - Adjustment for previous years use of cash limit	-138,750
TOTAL NEIGHBOURHOODS		3,766,737

REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

Saving Ref	Description	2014/2015
		£
RED1	Restructure in RED - this includes all service teams within the Service Grouping	294,630
RED2	Reduction in Supplies and Services - Economic Development (a reduction in all areas of expenditure in line with restructure).	248,625
RED4	Reduction in Supplies and Services - Transport (a reduction in all areas of expenditure in line with restructure)	57,500
RED8	Income Generation - Planning - review existing and new areas of charging	16,000
RED9	Income Generation - Transport - review existing and new areas of charging	50,000
RED13	CCTV (Reduction in costs following review of CCTV provision)	30,000
RED14	Review of supplies, services and income across RED Service Grouping	166,000
RES1	Assets disaggregation (former Estates team)	114,249
RES3	Assets disaggregation (former Planning and Investment team)	115,130
TOTAL RED		1,092,134

RESOURCES

Saving Ref	Description	2014/2015
		£
RES2	Reduction in supplies and services and other non-staffing budgets through efficiencies – Corporate Procurement	85,405
RES13	Reduction in supplies and services and other non-staffing budgets through efficiencies – Legal and Democratic Services	343,995
RES14	Restructure of HR Service	283,482
RES16	Service rationalisation of ICT Services	826,824
RES19	Restructure of Revenues and Benefits Service	465,000
RES20	Reduction in supplies and services and other non-staffing budgets through efficiencies – Corporate Finance	106,999
RES21	Service rationalisation of Audit and Risk	40,000
RES22	Court Cost Fee Income – Summons and Liability Costs Recovered – Financial Services	383,000
RES24.1	Use of cash limit	358,000
TOTAL RESOURCES		2,892,705

CORPORATE

Saving Ref	Description	2014/2015
		£
COR5	Members Budgets - Revenue to Capital Switch	840,000
COR6	Procurement Rebates - NEPO Savings	250,000
COR7	Strategic Highways - Switch of function from RED to NS	50,000
COR8	Replacement of Desk Top Printers with MFD	250,000
COR9	Procurement Reviews	536,000
COR9a	Procurement Reserve	104,000
COR10	Unitisation of Health & Safety	50,000
COR11	Office Closure over Christmas	24,000
COR12	Discretionary Rate Relief	330,000
TOTAL CORPORATE		2,434,000

Saving Ref	Description	2014/2015
		£
ACE	TOTAL ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVES SAVINGS	410,476
CAS	TOTAL CHILDREN AND ADULTS SERVICES SAVINGS	12,429,850
NS	TOTAL NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SAVINGS	3,766,737
RED	TOTAL REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SAVINGS	1,092,134
RES	TOTAL RESOURCES SAVINGS	2,892,705
COR	TOTAL CORPORATE SAVINGS	2,434,000
TOTAL SAVINGS		23,025,902

Glossary

AAPs	Area Action Partnerships	IFS	Institute for Fiscal Studies
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	IOM	Integrated Offender Management
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour	JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
AWC	Alternate Weekly Collection	JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
BDUK	Broadband Development UK	IRRV	Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation
CAT	Community Action Team	KS1 and KS2	Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2
CDP	County Durham Partnership	LCTSS	Local Council Tax Support Scheme
CTB	Council Tax Benefit	LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
CVD	Cardiovascular disease	LED	Light Emitting Diode
CYP&FP	Children, Young People and Families Plan	Lumiere	A spectacular festival of art and light in Durham in Nov 2011
DCC	Durham County Council	MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan
DLA	Disability Living Allowance	NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions	NETPARK	The science, engineering and technology park at Sedgefield
EHCP	Environmental Health & Consumer Protection	NHS	National Health Service
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund	OCU	Opiate or Crack Users
ESF	European Social Fund	Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
ESPA	Education & Services for people with Autism	ONS	Office for National Statistics
FOI	Freedom of Information	PIP	Personal Independence Payment
FSM	Free School Meals	PV	Photovoltaic
GP	General Practitioner	PVPR	Potentially Violent Persons Register
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education	PRD	Pre-Reprimand Disposal
HB	Housing Benefit	SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
HMO	Houses in Multiple Occupation	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
HWRC	Household Waste Recycling Centre	UC	Universal Credit
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies	VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector