



COUNCIL MEETING

21 September 2017

GATESHEAD COUNCIL

REPORT FROM THE CABINET

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This is the report from the Cabinet. Its purpose is to report on issues for the period July – September 2017.

PROGRESS ON KEY ISSUES

2. PEOPLE

Children and Young People

Adult Social Care

National Learning Disability and Autism awards

The Council was successful at the recent National Learning Disability and Autism Award held in Birmingham on 21 July 2017. Out of the 6 individuals/services representing Gateshead, New Vision enterprise won the 'Breaking Down Barriers' award with the judges remarking that they "shone through as an organisation that has vision, creativity and passion". Julie Todd won the 'Support Worker of the Year' award for her role with GATES. The judges said "Julie captivated the judges with her passion and commitment to making people with learning difficulties more visible within Gateshead. Julie assesses, understands and empowers people to gain meaningful employment and is clear in her drive to prove and increase employment opportunities within the area".

National Games

38 Special Olympics Gateshead Tyne & Wear athletes were selected to represent the Northern region at the Special Olympics Great Britain National Games in Sheffield on from 7 - 12 August 2017. Gateshead Tyne & Wear athletes represented the region in 8 sports: Aquatics, Athletics, Boccia, Cycling, Football, Judo, Powerlifting and Ten Pin Bowling. In total, 52 medals were awarded – 17 Gold, 19 Silver and 16 Bronze.

In addition, David Martin, one of the Special Olympics Gateshead Tyne & Wear powerlifters has been chosen to represent the Special Olympics GB team at the Commonwealth Powerlifting Championships, which is in South Africa in September 2017.

3. PLACE AND ECONOMY

Housing

Council Housing Demand at Year End 2016/17

There has been a significant reduction in numbers of applicants on the Council's housing register. At year end there were 6,727 applicants requesting rehousing in Gateshead compared to 10,179 at the end of previous year. During the same period numbers on the Tyne and Wear register also reduced from 36,276 to 29,163. From the 6,727 applicants seeking homes in Gateshead 674 (10%) have been assessed as having a recognised housing need. Demand remains strong for two bed bungalows and family homes.

During the year there was an increase in the number of council tenancies ending up to 1,948 from 1,839 in the previous year. At year end there were 502 vacant council properties compared to 441 at the end of the previous year. 124 of these empty homes (25% of all vacant properties) were located in four blocks: Eslington Court, Redheugh Court, Regent Court and Warwick Court.

The Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homelessness Reduction Act received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017 and has an anticipated commencement date of April 2018. The Act has 13 new clauses and puts prevention of homelessness on a statutory footing. The Code of Guidance which will accompany the Act is expected in late 2017.

Council Rent Arrears at Year End 2016/17

Current rent arrears increased in 2016/17 from £2,199,664 to £2,317,108 at year end (an increase of 5.34%). The pattern of increased rent arrears has continued since 2013 although the result for 2016/17 is still within the target set. 2016/17: Performance 2.59%. Target = 3% as a proportion of the annual rent roll.

During 2016/17 there was slight reduction in the number of tenancies affected by the under-occupancy penalty, the figure was down to 2,231 at year end from 2,272 at the start of the year. The impact of under occupation continues to be mitigated by payment of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). On average throughout the year, 770 tenants were in receipt of a DHP payment in any one week with a total of £496,567 paid to rent accounts over the year.

At year end there were 312 council tenants on Universal Credit who owed a total of £198,641 (average arrears of £637). The main reason for arrears is the six week delay between making a claim and receiving the first payment. The Council is monitoring the collection rate for tenants in receipt of Universal Credit. For example in month April 2017 tenants on Universal Credit paid 89.6% of the rent due, compared to 99% for all tenants. The roll out to Gateshead of Universal Credit "full service" will take place from October 2017.

Economy

Skills Programme for Marginalised Young People

Working in partnership with Gateshead College, the Council is looking at interventions specifically for young people between 16 and 18 years old at risk of or having offended and young people in the care system, aged over 16. An accredited programme has been developed and will be piloted in October 2017.

The programme will mainly focus on employability skills, occupational studies, advice and guidance around career development, next steps and planning. On completion of the programme, the young people will be offered route ways, dependent upon their

level, to either further education/training, employment opportunities such as apprenticeships, traineeships or sector based work academies.

4. COMMUNITIES

Communities and Volunteering

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Update

Recorded crime in Gateshead has increased by 22% in the four months to July 2017. Although this is an increase, this is smaller than the increase recorded on the whole of the Northumbria Force Area (+27%)

To help address these increases, the following action has been taken:

- Funding has been secured from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver a project within Accident and Emergency at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital until April 2020. The aim of the project is to increase domestic abuse provision in health and will include training for staff in Accident and Emergency, Maternity and Gynaecology
- A refreshed Substance Misuse strategy and action plan has been approved by the Community Safety and Health and Wellbeing boards. These documents set out the activities that will be undertaken locally in Gateshead to address drug and alcohol abuse
- A task and finish group has been established to address the offending behaviour of some of the most complex offenders in the Borough. Working with partners, including those from the voluntary sector, officers develop action plans tailored to each individual to ensure that the offender's vulnerability is effectively captured and addressed, which in turn leads to a more efficient way of tackling the root cause of the offending behaviour
- A number of engagement activities have been carried out to offer reassurance to residents so they can be confident partners are working together. We have held a Community Safety Awareness Event at Saltwell Park, a targeted disruption operation in the East of the Borough and a number of focus groups with BME residents to capture their thoughts and feelings about safety in their neighbourhood

5. CONCLUSION

The Council is asked to note this report.