



# COUNCIL MEETING

26 March 2020

## 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 January – March 2020.

#### PROGRESS ON KEY ISSUES

#### 2. PLACE AND ECONOMY

##### *Environment and Transport*

##### Maintenance Assessment

The Council has again been successful in achieving the highest 'Band 3' status in the Government's self-assessment process relating to road maintenance. This will mean that for the next financial year an additional £321,000 capital maintenance funding will be received than would have been the case for the lower Band 2 rating. Sustaining the Band 3 rating over the last 3 years means the Council will have received some £688,000 more capital funding for maintenance of its roads than would have otherwise been the case.

##### Angel Court – Connection to HEIGHTs

As of March 2020, Angel Court, sheltered housing site in Harlow Green, was connected to the Gateshead HEIGHTs scheme, extending the district heat network that already serves Ripley and Willerby courts. This will provide heat to Angel Court from the ground source heat pump system, helping to reduce costs and carbon emissions of heat for the site.

##### *Housing*

##### Private Rented Homes: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Grant Funding

In Gateshead we have seen the effects of modern-day slavery, and the impact on individuals that are vulnerable to exploitation after illegal immigration. Properties are being found to be being used as cannabis farms, in connection with sex work and as hubs for crime and anti-social behaviour and the majority of these are in the private rented sector. Vulnerable tenants are often afraid to complain so the problems caused by criminal landlords can remain hidden. Relying on complaints from tenants is not enough and is not changing the behaviour of the criminal landlords operating in the area.

The proportion of privately rented housing is increasing year on year in Gateshead and the Private Sector Housing Team tasked with enforcing the law relating to private housing are experiencing a number of ongoing private rented sector enforcement challenges.

In November 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) invited proposals from local authorities for funding that would be made available in February 2020, and that must be spent by the local authority by 31 March 2020. The purpose of the funding is to support new, innovative or short-term initiatives that enhance private rented sector enforcement activity.

The Council was successful in an application for £36,400 to fund:

- front line officer training to provide the necessary skills, knowledge and procedures to carry out investigations to best practice standards and to successfully recover housing offence related debt from landlords committing housing related criminal offences; and
- fixed term recruitment of an individual to join the team for a short period that will help to make up the work hours lost; and the purchase of laptops to facilitate agile working.

#### Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Rough Sleeping Funding Update

In collaboration with regional partners The Gateshead Housing Company have been successful in securing a further 12 months MHCLG funding for the rough sleeping projects. The funding allows TGHC to continue to provide the seven units of "Housing First" accommodation and the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub for rough sleepers previously set up in 2019. With the additional funding, the Sit Up Service hours will be extended to provide a 24-hour service. The services will continue to be delivered in partnership with Oasis Community Housing.

### **3. COMMUNITIES**

#### Knife Angel

The Knife Angel, a 27ft structure made from 100,000 knives was brought to Gateshead in February 2020. This was part of a project by the charity, Samantha's Legacy, to raise awareness of knife crime and the dangers of carrying a knife. The project was supported by Gateshead Council, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Northumbria Police.

The project was incredibly successful and generated a lot of public interest; the Chronicle covered the duration of the knife angel's visit in their print newspaper and online, whilst coverage of the opening ceremony was also featured on the local BBC and Tyne Tees news programmes.

Initial feedback from the project has been positive. A visitors' book was on display in the foyer at Sage Gateshead for people to comment or leave messages remembering loved ones. Most, if not all, of the visitors to the sculpture have found it very moving and thought provoking. More than 1,300 young people have been part of the talks delivered by Samantha's Legacy and the feedback from the young people is largely positive, with some noting that they had never considered the impact of knife crime on the victim's family before but hearing Samantha's story changed their views.

Both Sage Gateshead and Baltic reported increases in sales during the period compared to previous years. Baltic reported a 50% uplift in business at the café; while Sage Gateshead saw a 35% increase in the café, a 19% increase in sales at the shop and a 56% increase in visitors. The Knife Angel is touring the country until 2021.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The Council is asked to note this report.