

Unitary County Durham: over a decade in the making

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Chief Executive



Outline

- Introduction to County Durham
- Background to LGR in County Durham
- Community engagement
- Local decision-making and engagement
- Savings
- Reflections

County Durham

- 530,000 people over 862 sq miles
- 12 main centres and hundreds of smaller towns and villages
- Nearly half live in the 30% most deprived wards nationally
- Largest council in the North East and 7th largest unitary nationally



Background to LGR 2009

1992-2002	Local government commission headed by Sir John Banham
1994	Government confirmed proposal for a Darlington unitary authority
1995	Structural Change Order for creation of Darlington unitary authority laid
1997	Darlington unitary authority created
2002	Soundings taken on appetite for referendum on regional assembly
2003	Local government review led by Boundary Committee
2004	North East regional assembly and contingent local government reorganisation vote
October 2006	Local Government White Paper, 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'
December 2007	Government confirmed their final decision on unitary proposals
2007/08	Legal challenges
Feb 2008	Parliamentary approval for new unitary authority
May 2008	Shadow unitary authority election
Summer 2008	Chief Executive recruited
Autumn 2008	Corporate Management Team recruited
April 2009	Vesting day



County Durham pre-2009

- Eight separate authorities.
- Variable service performance ranging from 'excellent' in some cases to 'poor' CPA ratings in others.
- Some services, e.g. housing in 'special measures'.
- Variable performance in terms of running costs, ranging from large economic units to some of the smallest district councils in the country.
- Large number of elected Members involved in making decisions – more executive councillors in County Durham than Ministers in central government.



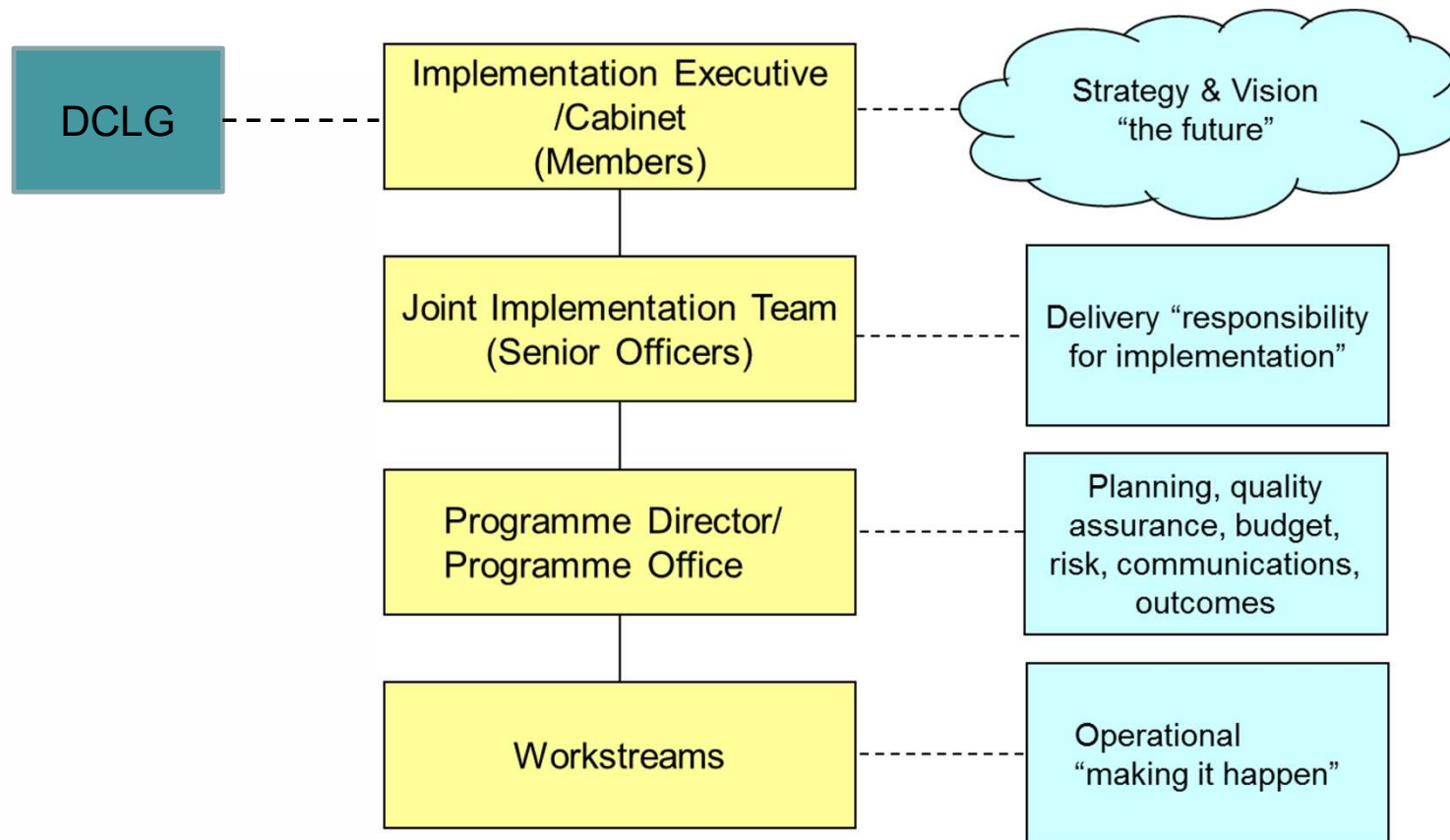
Key aims of the new council

- Built around citizens and communities
- Improved public services
- Stronger community leadership
- Clear accountability
- Cost effective and efficient
- Simpler system

Altogether better



Programme governance structure



Key activity: May 2008 Elections

- Unprecedented number of candidates
- Female representation doubled from 15.9% to 30.2%
- New council made up of 35 ex-county councillors, 71 ex-district councillors and 20 new councillors
- 10 strong Cabinet selected following confirmation of newly elected county councillor Simon Henig as Leader
- IDe&A commissioned to work with new Cabinet on strategy development



Key activity: Executive Appointments

- Appointed Chief Executive in July 2008. Took up post in September 2008.
- Immediately presented proposal to Council on design of the senior team for approval.
- Appointment of 5 Directors and an Assistant Chief Executive in October 2008 which completed the line up of a 7- strong Corporate Management Team
- 4 new to the county; 3 former county council



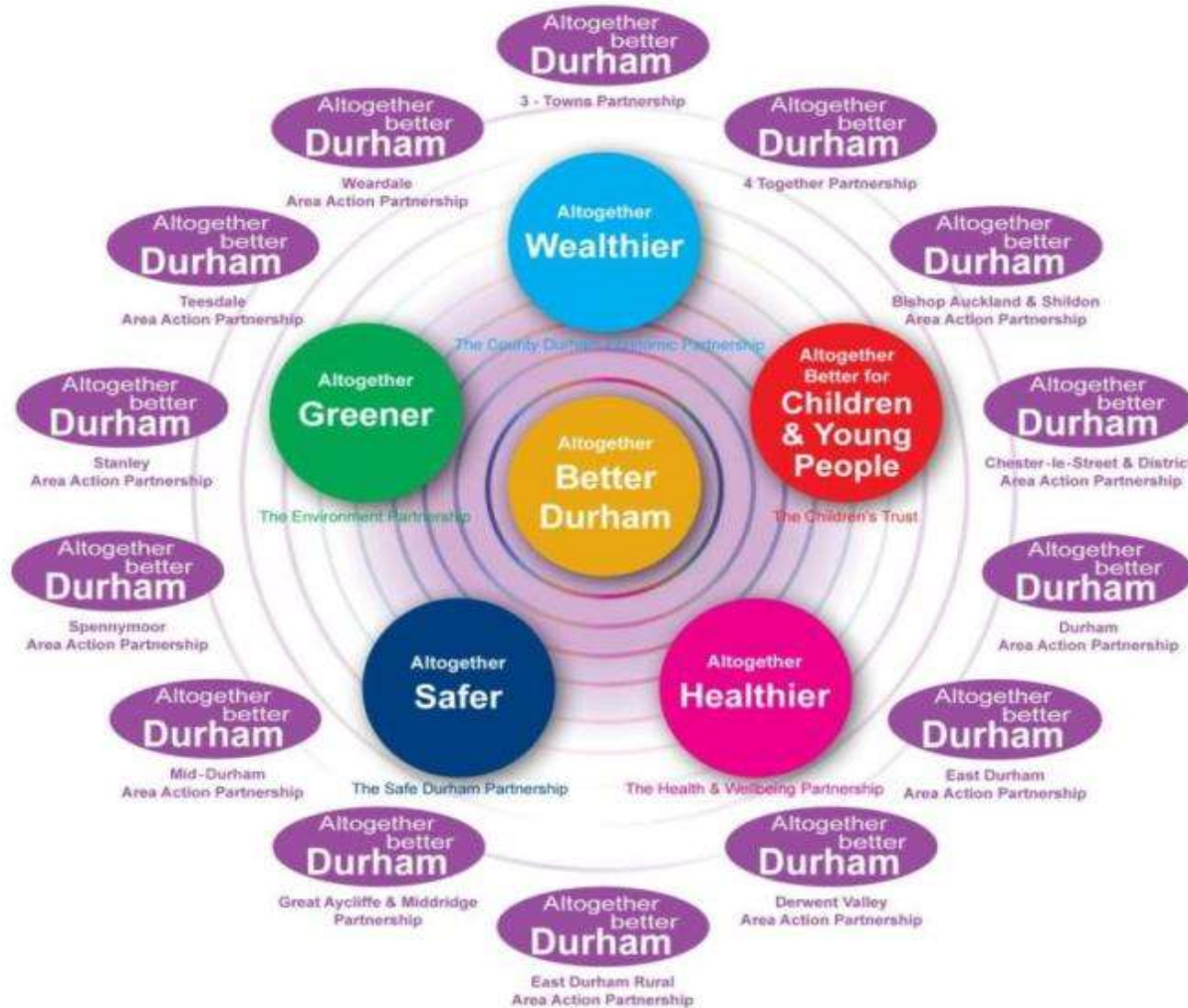
Key activity: HR

- Transition planning team managing restructure of staff
- Parallel ER/VR 'trawl'
- HR developments
 - Manager's handbook
 - Pay protection
 - ER/VR scheme
 - Induction- Vesting Day welcome pack for all staff
 - Member Training strategy
- Positive trade union engagement model
- Consultation with staff
- Career transition support through SOLACE

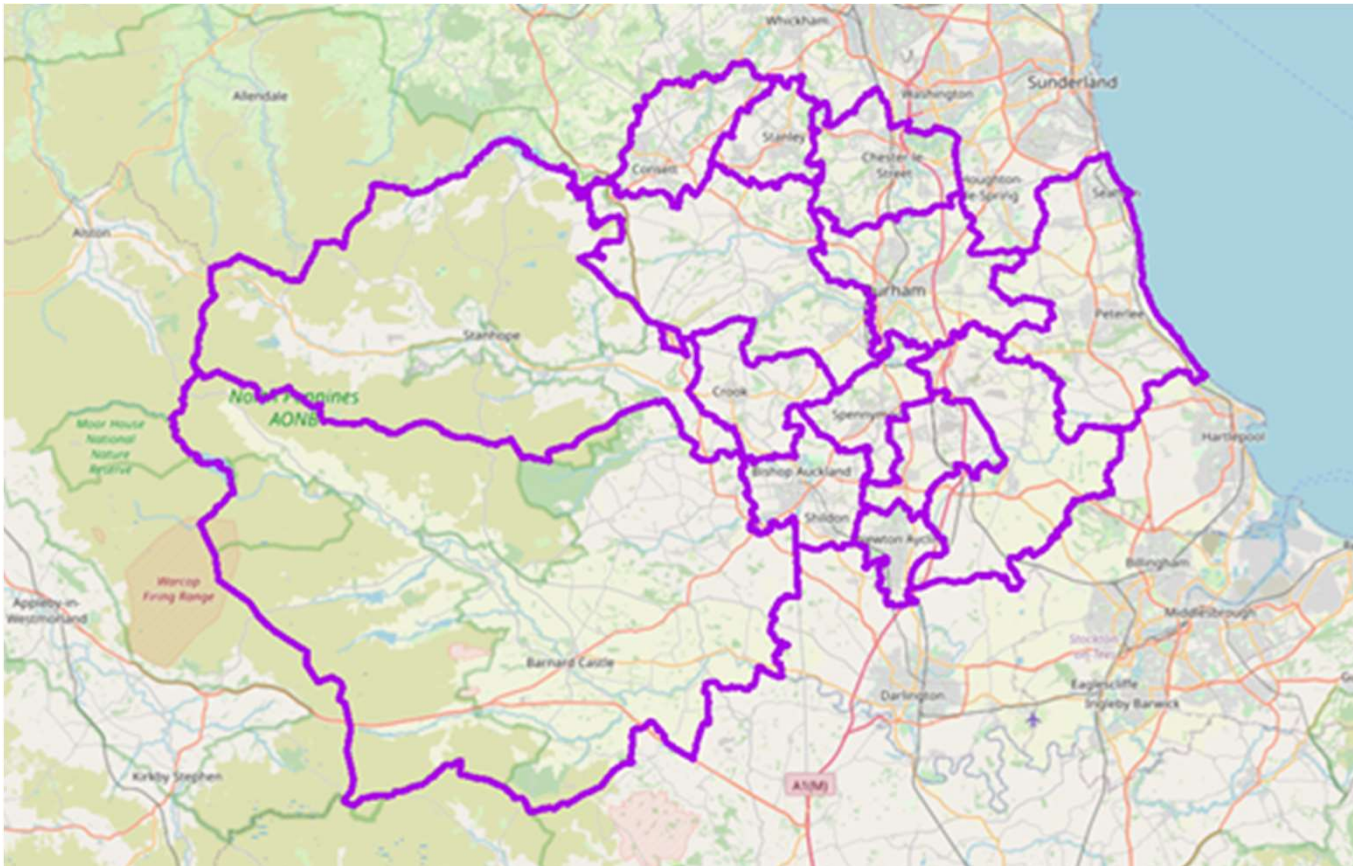
Consultative approach

- Pre-regulation Joint Implementation Team (JIT) and Member group established
- Member seminars for policy development
- Cross-party Constitution Working Group
- Regular meetings with Trade Unions
- Staff consultation on senior management structure, Heads of Service and 4th tier posts
- Extensive public consultation on area action partnerships and council name
- Stakeholder involvement through workstreams e.g. Health and Police

Local decision making and engagement



New community engagement mechanisms - AAPS



Role and purpose of AAPs



Altogether better

Structure of AAPs and budget

AAP Forum

Over 13,000 people across the County.
Meet twice a year

AAP Board

7 Public Reps, 7 Partner agencies, 7 Councillors
Minimum requirement 6 meetings annually

AAP Task Groups

Over 53 groups meeting monthly to develop Action Plans and projects attended by over 1000 participants

Area Budget of £145,000 to allocate to local project delivery

Member Neighbourhood Budgets of £20,000 can also fund AAP project delivery

10 years ...

- Developed over 6,500 projects hand in hand with local communities; the vast majority of delivered by community groups.
- Invested over £42 million in local project delivery.
- Attracted over £55.5 million of additional match funding.
- Played a key role in the successful asset transfer of over 100 community assets.
- Carried out some of the largest participatory budget exercises in the country – allocating £1.4 million attracting over £3 million in match.
- Central to community response to COVID-19.





**Over
4,000**



residents helped to access food
through the community support hub



£3.2m

available for community
and volunteer projects with

£605k agreed

so far for 154 schemes



Savings

- Economies of scale and economies of scope
- Initial savings of £20.533m delivered
- Significant further savings made through reorganisation once new council had bedded in
- One off transition costs were £21.2m
- Senior management costs reduced £2.823m (52 senior posts reduced to 7)
- Some efficiency savings redirected e.g. into new community engagement mechanisms through Area Action Partnerships (AAPs)
- Savings and efficiencies helped with managing austerity

2011/12 – 2019/20

2020/21 – 2023/24

£234,000,000

£34,200,000



Reorganisation successes

- Blueprint for new Council
 - Development by Members
 - 'Desired end state' design
 - Vision and values
 - Council priorities - how we will deliver services in the future
 - Community engagement model developed with communities
- Suite of harmonised policies and strategies drawing on best practice internally and externally developed, for example
 - Licencing
 - Planning
 - Housing
 - Waste Management



Reorganisation successes

- Revamped strategy and performance management system focusing on regeneration
- Customer access points and co-location
- Improved access to services
 - Single telephone number
 - Single website
 - Access anywhere in the County
 - More online services via CRM
- Service improvements
 - Common allocations policy – choice-based lettings
 - Countywide homelessness prevention
 - Expanded green waste collections
 - Assisted bin collections
 - Key fees and charges harmonised
 - Integrated planning service
 - Taxi licencing harmonised and enhanced



Creating more and better jobs

We're working hard to bring more and better jobs to County Durham in order to increase employment opportunities for residents and boost our economy. Over the next decade, we're expecting to see £3.4 billion of investment in the county, resulting in the creation of up to 30,000 new jobs by 2035.

Here, we look at some of the strategic investment sites in the county where many of the jobs will be created.



Aykley Heads
- high quality proposed business space in the heart of the city which will deliver up to 6,000 jobs.

Aykley Heads up to 6,000 jobs

Over £240 million invested on Durham's riverside including:

The Riverwalk
- a mixture of retail, leisure and student accommodation.



Millburngate
- a mixed use development which will include office, retail, leisure, residential and hotel space.



Millburngate up to 1,000 jobs

Durham University
- £1 billion masterplan expanding student numbers and creating 750 new jobs. £3.4 million also invested in the new Durham City Incubator.



£90 million of investment by GlaxoSmithKline into a new manufacturing facility in Barnard Castle.

£100 million invested in **Project Genesis** regenerating the former steel works area in Consett.



Beamish Museum
£17 million Remaking Beamish project.



Integra 61 - £189 million development next to A1(M) and close to Durham City.

Integra 61, Bowburn up to 3,700 jobs



Jade, Seaham up to 3,120 jobs

£200 million **Jade Enterprise Zone** Manufacturing and distribution opportunities on a fully serviced site next to A19 near Seaham.



New £12 million railway station at **Horden** coming 2020.

£120 million **Durham Gate** development near Spennymoor and £10 million in surrounding developments.

Forrester Park, Newton Aycliffe up to 3,280 jobs



Over £100 million expansion of **NETPark** at Sedgefield - home to the North East's only science and technology park.

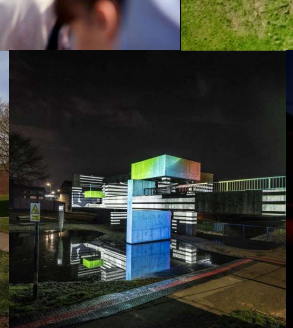
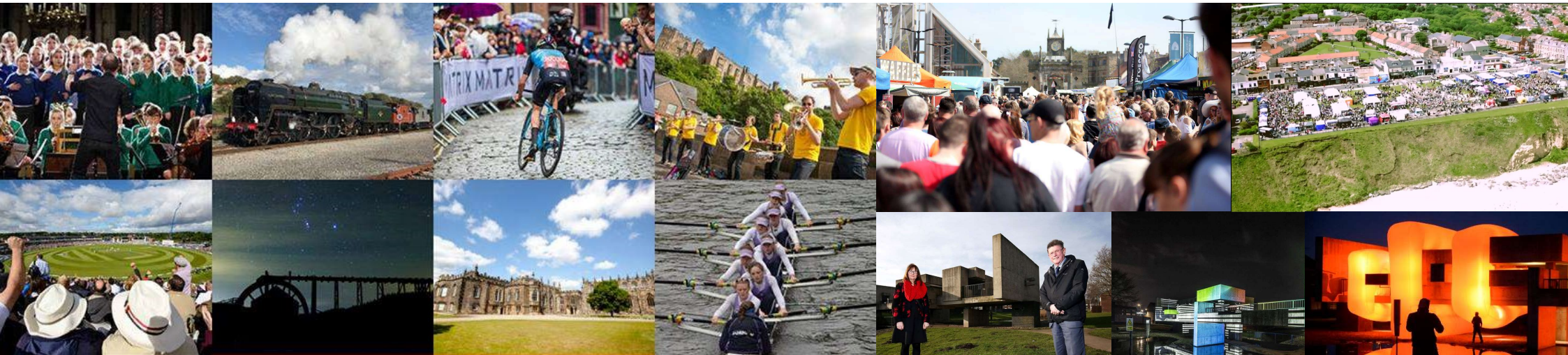
NETPark, Phase 3 up to 2,050 jobs



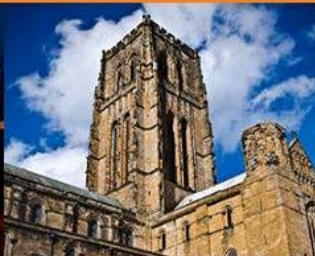
Bishop Auckland - over £210 million investment into the town, castle and surrounding area by The Auckland



Forrester Park next to A1(M) at Newton Aycliffe - £170 million expansion of Aycliffe



#durham19



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Reflections

- Being clear on vision and keeping the focus on the community
- Establishing clear leadership:
 - Elections and mandate
 - Chief Executive and management team
- Establishing clear internal communication channels across different organisations:
 - 'New Era' website to provide open channel accessible to all district and county staff
 - Joint newsletters and staff communications
 - Committing to milestones and timeframes for staff
 - Stressing continuity though the creation of a new authority

Reflections

- Prioritising what needs to be done for vesting day and what can happen down the line
 - ‘It is possible to eat an elephant, just not all in one go’
- Good Communications
- Staff Briefings
- Managing the money
- Grip on performance
- Being visible
- Thinking about your blind spot and how you will react
- Provided the basis for strong response to austerity

Overall

- Constantly good performance
- Staff morale improved
- Good member and staff engagement
- Owned by the community
- Strong financial performance
- Strong desire and culture to provide the best possible service for our community
- Helped re austeritiy and Covid

Reflections

- Top three critical success factors:

People,
People,
People

- *Focus on your community*
- *Develop positive staff culture and morale*
- *Establish good working arrangements with elected Members*



Looking ahead

- Responding to Covid
- Resetting the organisation
- Elections
- Devolution
- Building on what we have achieved
- Continuing to maximise partnership working
- County Durham Vision and Plan