
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

Cabinet

1. I have chaired two meetings of Cabinet since my last report to Council.

Highway and Footpath Repairs

2. The Council is aware, from research that it has undertaken, that the condition of roads and pavements is a top priority for Darlington residents and that is why an extra £2.5 million is being invested, over the next two years, in addition to the annual maintenance budget, into improving highways and pavements within the Borough. In order to tackle the smaller jobs that the Council may be unaware of, all homes within the Borough will receive a letter asking where these problems are, so the money can be spent on repairs that the residents believe are a priority.

Last year the Council invested more than £12 million in highway maintenance and this investment will continue in order to improve the roads within the Borough.

Town Centre

3. I attended a meeting of the Town Centre Forum held on 14th September, 2005. The purpose of the Forum was to provide an opportunity for Members of the Forum and town centre businesses to meet representatives from the contractor, Birse Civils Limited, who had been appointed to undertake the main construction works for the Town Centre Pedestrian Scheme and to give them an opportunity to input into the programming of those work.

Joint Strategy Committee

4. I attended the meeting of the Joint Strategy Committee held on 25th July, 2005, at which, amongst other items, the Business Plan for the Joint Strategy Unit, the Northern Way Growth Strategy and a Bus Network Review were discussed.

Comprehensive Performance Inspection 2005

5. I was interviewed on 5th September, 2005, by PricewaterhouseCoopers, as part of the 2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The inspection concerns the Council's Use of Resources and Value for Money. The inspection is ongoing until the end of September 2005, involving extensive interviews of officers and the evaluation of evidence that we have supplied, although we will not know the result until December 2005. The inspection is considering how good the Council is at using resources to deliver services and whether the Council gives value for money. As part of the inspection we were required to do a self-assessment that suggested that the Council gives good value for money, having generally

low cost and high satisfaction levels. The inspection also looks at the links between financial and service planning.

‘Darlington – Where Quality Comes to Life’

6. I welcomed a prestigious audience, including private sector developers, property agents, major Darlington companies, tourism and town centre businesses to the Launch of the ‘Darlington – Where Quality Comes to Life’ CD Rom. The Launch was held at Stephenson House, Morton Palms Business Park on 8th September, 2005. The CD Rom will be used to attract new business investment opportunities, as well as to attract tourists and new retailers to the Borough. The CD Rom has been funded by the Council and through the BAT Legacy Fund.

John Williams
Leader