
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that I have undertaken as Leader :-

- (a) **Corporate Assessment** – Cabinet, at its meeting held on 21st September, 2004, considered and approved the information to be sent to the Audit Commission to support the Council's corporate assessment, as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process for 2004.

The Corporate Assessment Team (CAT), from the Audit Commission, visited the Council to carry out the on-site inspection, during the week commencing Monday 11th October 2004. I attended the round table meeting with the Corporate Assessment Team on 4th October, 2004, which was the week before the visit and the feedback session on 15th October, 2004. I also had an interview with the CPA Team on 13th October, 2004.

The final decision from the inspection is expected in December.

- (b) **Historic Environment and Design Champion** – Cabinet recommended to Council that Councillor David Lyonette, in his role as Cabinet Member with Regeneration and Planning Portfolio, be appointed as this Council's Member Champion for the Historic Environment. The Council are aware of the importance of the historic environment and by appointing a Historic Environment and Design Champion, are ensuring that the historic environment is at the heart of the Council agenda.
- (c) **Police Response** – I called for a meeting with the Chief Constable regarding the quality of police responses to calls from Darlington residents and this meeting was held with Members of the Council, before the Special Council meeting on 2nd November, 2004.
- (d) **CCTV** – This Council's town centre Closed Circuit Television Centre system celebrates its tenth anniversary this month. The success of the system has been widely recognised and has gained substantial grants that has allowed the system to be extended to residential areas, and also into parks and cemeteries. To date the cameras have helped police make more than 4,000 arrests.

I continue to support the CCTV system, which is a great success, and it is planned to continue its development and I attended a photocall, in this regard, for the Northern Echo, with Alan Milburn MP.

- (e) **Central Park** – I represented the Council and gave a speech at the launch of ‘Central Park’ Master Plan on 5th October, 2004. The £170 million development is important to the continued development and regeneration of the town, is sited on Haughton Road and is part of the Gateway Project. The development will bring many needed new jobs to the town, including construction jobs, and continue to raise the profile of Darlington nationally.
- (f) **Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO’s)** – I have continued to promote the issuing of ASBO’s and to publicly name those young offenders.
- (g) **VIBE Awards** – I attended the VIBE Awards at the Civic Theatre. This is an annual event, organised by the Darlington Partnership, to celebrate the achievements of young people aged between 11 and 19, from the Borough of Darlington. The awards cover a variety of categories, including Contribution to the Community, Against all Odds and Outstanding Achievement in Sport, Art and Drama/Music.
- (h) **Town Centre Business Plan** – I attended and spoke at the launch of the Town Centre Business Plan entitled ‘Where Quality Comes to Life’. The three year Plan with accompanying annual Action Plan was officially launched at the event by Alan Milburn MP. The audience was made up of representatives from Town Centre businesses and stakeholders, the public sector and developers and investors. The Plan outlines the vision for the Town Centre in terms of its prosperous and balanced development in commercial, cultural, tourism and leisure activities.
- (i) **Members’ Charter** – I attended the launch of the Members’ Charter, which was held at this Council, and I gave a welcome speech to those in attendance at the event, which was organised by the North East Regional Employers Organisation.
- (j) **Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College** – I was invited, as a guest, to attend the official opening of the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College new building which provides another platform for Education in Darlington.
- (k) **Branksome Residents Association** – I attended a meeting of the Branksome Residents Association to give a talk on the role of Councillors.
- (l) **Darlington Partnership Board** – I attended the meeting of the Darlington Partnership Board at which a presentation on the Darlington ‘A Town on the Move’ initiative was given highlighting its strong relationship to the Community Strategy. The draft Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, an update on the ways in which Anti-Social Behaviour was being tackled in the town, the status of the Darlington Parish Councils and the performance of the Community Strategy against the agreed indicators and targets were discussed. Verbal reports were also given on issues arising from Themed Groups, Community Partnerships and the Tees Valley Partnership.
- (m) **Remembrance Sunday Service** – I attended the annual Remembrance Sunday Service at Holy Trinity Church followed by a Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Cenotaph.

- (n) **Town Centre Board** – I chaired the meeting of the Town Centre Board held on 18th November, 2004, at which a review of the Indoor and Outdoor markets formed the main agenda item. The Commercial Street site, Pedestrian Heart scheme and Bondgate scheme were also discussed alongside the announcement of a Darlington Loyalty card working in partnership with local businesses and staff from Lingfield Point.

Councillor John Williams, Leader