
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

Cabinet

1. At the meeting of Cabinet held on 7th June, 2005, the annual appointment of Members to Outside Bodies for the 2005/06 Municipal Year were made.

Town Centre

2. I Chaired the meeting of the Town Centre Forum held on 10th June, 2005. The Forum received a presentation on the progress of the Town Centre Business Plan and Action Plan for Year 1 together with presentations on the developments that were taking place throughout the town and specifically within Town Centre. Hugo Hawkings, Chief Executive of Discovery Properties addressed the Forum on the proposals for the Commercial Street development. Suggestions were put forward by the Forum for inclusion within the Town Centre Business Plan Year 2 Action Plan.
3. I also chaired the meeting of the Town Centre Board held on 21st July, 2005, at which feedback from the Town Centre Forum was discussed. Reports were submitted on the Darlington Town Centre Business Plan Year Two Action Points; Business Information Guides; the results of the survey undertaken with the Skinnergate Area of the Town Centre; managing the change in the Town Centre, particularly in respect of car parking; and the current position with respect to the introduction of the E-Newsletter. Verbal reports were also given on the Draft Logo Designs and the Pedestrian Heart Scheme.
4. Work on the Town Centre Pedestrian Heart scheme is continuing and it is expected that the main contractor will be appointed shortly. Once appointed the contractor will work closely with the designers Gillespies and the Council to plan the work schedule, costs and timescales before construction begins in early September.

TextVibe

5. The Council has remained on course to achieve the Government's target for all local authorities to have services available electronically by the end of the year. As part of this initiative the Council has launched a groundbreaking scheme 'TextVibe'. The scheme allows the young people of the town to find out what is happening as well as having their say about life in Darlington and how it could be improved. Texts are sent to the young people to ascertain their views on a host of issues including events, transport and sport facilities. By replying, they become an integral part of the decision-making process.

6. This scheme is the latest in a raft of services that can now be accessed electronically as the Council remains on schedule to achieve the Government's target.

Summer Holidays

7. The school holidays begin in a few weeks, and the Council has arranged a host of activities to keep children and young people entertained. The events include activities such as DJ and circus workshops, a mobile skate park, together with a host of special events and attractions at the Council's leisure facilities including the Railway Centre and Museum, Dolphin Centre and Arts Centre.
8. This year's Darlington Festival will take place throughout the whole of July and will provide events and attractions, including live music, for the whole family. The Council is working to make the town a pleasant and safe place for people to live and provide activities to fire the imaginations of our children and young people to ensure that they are kept safe in the school holidays.

Interview Panel

9. I chaired the Panel held on 17th June, 2005, that interviewed candidates for the post of Assistant Director, Public Protection within the Development and Environment Department. Bill Westland who is currently the Environmental Services Manager within the Development and Environment Department was appointed to the post.

Durham Tees Valley Airport Limited

10. I attended the unveiling ceremony of the 'Forgotton Hero Statue' at Durham Tees Valley Airport. An appeal by the Northern Echo raised the money to pay for the statue of Andrew Mynarski a Canadian World War II air gunner who died at the age of 27 when the Lancaster bomber he was flying was attacked over France. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for battling to save the life of friend Pat Brophy.
11. I also attended the Board meeting of the Durham Tees Valley Airport held on Tuesday, 19th July, 2005.

Civic Reception

12. A Civic Reception was hosted by the Mayor, Councillor Stella Robson, on Friday 10th June, 2005, for Joyce Standing, to mark her achievements of dedicating more than 40 years of her life to the Skerne Park community, which I attended. Joyce was jointly named Citizen of the Year in 1996 and was an original member of the Darlington Residents Panel, which was set up in 1994.

West Park

13. I attended the ceremony which marked the official handing over to this Council of West Park, which is Darlington's first new park for over 100 years, on Tuesday, 21st June, 2005.

No Smoking Policy

14. Businesses in Darlington have been urged to back a town-wide campaign to ban smoking in public places. Darlington Borough Council and Darlington Primary Care Trust are spearheading the campaign in a bid to improve health in the town. The council is leading the way in trying to ban smoking in public places ahead of the Governments 2007 target.
15. In response to customers comments and requests smoking has been banned from all of the Council's leisure and arts venues in June. I attended the official launch of the policy on 27th June, 2005, at which the Council received the Clean Air Award. I accepted four Clean Air Awards, from the Chief Executive of Darlington PCT Colin Morris, on behalf of the Council.
16. The Dolphin Centre was awarded gold for banning smoking inside and outside the building. The Civic Theatre, Arts Centre and Stressholme Golf Club were awarded silver for banning smoking inside but providing designated areas for smokers in their grounds.

Meetings

17. I have attended a number of events in my role as Leader of the Council, including the North East Assembly RSS Special Plenary Meeting; Citizenship Ceremony; Local Government Association General Assembly and Annual Conference; Cummins Engine Plant 40th Anniversary Celebrations; and the Tees Valley Partnership Board at which representatives from One NorthEast attended to discuss the Regional Economic Strategy.

Councillor John Williams, Leader