
OVERVIEW OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken under the Regeneration and Planning Portfolio :-
 - (a) **Falchion Fund – Revision to Terms** – Cabinet approved revisions to the financial terms of the Falchion Fund Agreement between the Council and HSBC Plc as the original agreement, approved in March 1995, was considered to be outdated. Although the main principles of the agreement remain unchanged, it was considered necessary to modify it in order to secure an up-to-date agreement between HSBC plc and this Council as principal financial stakeholders in the scheme and to ensure compatibility with current economic trends.
 - (b) **Review of Borough of Darlington Local Plan – Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004** – Cabinet has considered the options available for progressing the replacement for the Borough Local Plan, in the light of the government’s current proposals, under the forthcoming Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, for transition to new development plan arrangements. The options available were to progress a replacement local plan through to adoption as a local plan to be placed on first deposit by the date the new arrangements come into force or restarting the plan as a Local Development Framework involving re-consultation and/or further consultation on issues and options, strategic environmental appraisal and sustainability appraisal. Approval was given for the replacement of the Borough Local Plan to be progressed as a Local Development Framework.
 - (c) **Countryside Management Service Provision** – We have agreed an extension of the contract with the Tees Forest Land Management Services for a further twelve months period up to 20th April, 2005 .in order to deliver the Council’s Countryside Management Service Provision. It is anticipated that there will be a full tendering process by March 2005 in order to let the service for a three-year period.
 - (d) **West Park - RICS Award** – West Park won the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Gold Award for Regeneration in the Regional Renaissance Awards on Friday 16 April. This is the first year of these prestigious RICS awards and, in the face of strong competition from other shortlisted projects such as Blyth Quayside and part of Grainger Town, Newcastle (both of which have previously won national awards), the category was won by West Park.

The award is for the development, so it is equally the work of Bussey and Armstrong and for the work of the Council. The judges citation praised the partnership between the Council and the developer being important to the success of the development.

- (e) **Development Control Best Value Review - Customer satisfaction Surveys -**
The results of the latest Customer Satisfaction Survey's covering the period between November 2002 to September 2003 show a high level of satisfaction with the Development Control service. Figures of 92% and 87% overall satisfaction have been achieved against a background of significantly increased workloads. The results are combined with other Best Value results to contribute to the Council's CPA 'Environment' score.
- (f) **Faverdale East Business Park – Phase I** - Contractors went on site on 19th April 2004, to commence the infrastructure contract for the provision of roads and services. The scheme has been funded through the Single Programme, European Regional Development Fund and Darlington Borough Council. This first phase of development will have the capacity to accommodate 880 jobs over the next 5 – 7 years.
- (g) **Faverdale East Business Park - Phase II** – We agreed to the sale of the whole of the Council's Faverdale East Business Park Phase II site for the development of a large warehouse and distribution centre to a major internet retailer. In agreeing to the sale we gave consideration to the principal Heads of Terms negotiated and approved the serving of appropriate notices.

The combination of a serviced site with outline planning permission were key factors in attracting Argos Direct to locate to Faverdale East Business Park. The new 740,000 sq ft warehouse will serve the north of England. This warehouse may create up to 700 jobs. A planning application has been received and will be considered on 30 June 2004. This announcement received major regional television, radio and press coverage and demonstrated that Darlington can attract significant investment to the region.

- (h) **Procurement** - Following the success of the 'How to Do Business with the Council' event on 19 March, Tees Valley Business Development Officers, Procurement Officers and Business Link Tees Valley will be developing a programme of similar events over 2004/05 to continue to raise awareness of the Councils' procurement and e-procurement policies and the opportunities available to businesses to win contracts from all of the public sector. The Economic Regeneration & Tourism Section and Policy Unit will be co-ordinating awareness raising events in Darlington.
- (i) **Darlington Social Issues Map** - The Darlington Social Issues Map has been updated for 2004 to reflect revised ward boundaries and include new data. This provides detailed information on deprivation at a local level will be an important tool in assisting people developing funding bids in the coming year. The Government have also released their Index of Deprivation 2004, which ranks local authority areas and 'Super Output Areas' which represent subsections of wards. The headlines from the new index are:
- Darlington is the 87th most deprived local authority area in England (out of 354)
 - The most deprived part in Darlington is the Coleridge Gardens/Severn Way/Arkle Crescent area of Park East (ranked in the worst 1% nationally)
 - The least deprived part in Darlington is the Leith Road/Hill Close Avenue/Edinburgh Drive area of Hummersknott (ranked in the best 6% nationally)

- (j) **Risk Management Work** – A submission prepared by the Council has been shortlisted for an award in the Partnership working category at the Association of Local Authority Risk Management (ALARM) awards. The submission highlights the good partnership working in the area of risk management between the Council’s Building Control Section and the Fire Service. The winners will be announced at the ALARM conference which will be taking place next month in Manchester.

Councillor David Lyonette
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio