
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

Cabinet

1. I have chaired two meetings of Cabinet since my last report to Council at which a number of issues were discussed including an extension of time to enter into a Southside Development Agreement at Durham Tees Valley Airport under the Subscription and Shareholders Agreement; the Council's Service Plans for 2006/07; and the appointment of Councillor Long to the Darlington College Corporation Board.

Education Village

2. Darlington's £37.3m Education Village is now complete and has opened its doors to pupils from Springfield Primary, Haughton Community School and Beaumont Hill Technology College. It is the first school of its kind in the country, where three schools, with pupils of all ages and abilities, will be taught together in the same learning campus, under the governance of a single federated governing body. The technology, sports and leisure facilities contribute to an overall learning environment that is second to none and will assist every single child to fulfil their potential.

Darlington Partnership Board

3. I attended the meeting of the Darlington Partnership Board held on 17th May, 2006, at which a number of issues were discussed, including Town Twinning, Choosing Health and an update on the Community Strategy and Action Plan.

'Let's Get Cracking' Campaign

4. As part of the 'Let's Get Cracking' Campaign, questionnaires were sent out to residents, asking where they wanted the Council to spend its budget on repairs to roads and pavements. Following the return of 1,000 of the surveys, work has started on the areas which the residents identified as a priority. The state of the Borough's road and footpaths is something that affects everyone and such is the importance of the issue, a further £2.5 m has been pledged in addition to the £2m already set aside for highways maintenance to help tackle it. The first phase of work includes a number of streets throughout the Borough, addressing problems such as cracked pavements and flooding.

‘Don’t Put Your Foot In It’ Campaign

5. Residents are being asked to help Darlington Council’s environmental wardens catch dog owners who let their dogs foul streets and parks. Postcards have been produced urging residents to call the wardens and report any one they see allowing their dog to foul in the street. The postcards, which include a hotline number, will be posted through the doors in the worst dog fouling areas. Information cards are also being produced reminding people that leaving their rubbish out too early can be an offence.

Town Centre Board

6. I chaired the meeting of the Town Centre Board at which a presentation was given, by Karol Marketing, on the Town’s Marketing Strategy. Other reports considered at the meeting were the Darlington Markets and updates on the Pedestrian Heart Scheme, Membership Scheme and the refurbishment of Marks and Spencer and the Cornmill Centre Car Park.

Borough Solicitor

7. I was involved in the appointment process for the new Borough Solicitor, including the shortlisting and interviews. Cath Whitehead was appointed to the post and she will be taking up her appointment on the 31st July, 2006. She is currently Head of Legal Services at North Yorkshire County Council.

Cath previously worked at Darlington Borough Council from 1997 to 2001. She came to Darlington just prior to LGR as the new Social Services and Housing Principal Solicitor and became the Legal Services Manager in 1999. In the interim Luke Swinhoe the Legal Services Manager is discharging the role.

Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee

8. A special meeting of the Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee, which I attended, was held on 8th May, 2006. The meeting was called to consider the consultation document ‘Foundation Trust: Be part of our future’ following the application by County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust to become an NHS Foundation Trust.

Darlington Champions

9. I attended a Darlington Champions lunch, hosted by Latimer Hinks Solicitors, on 3rd May, 2006. Darlington Champions is aimed at those who are interested in helping Darlington develop a vibrant and enterprising local community sector and for those good causes and charitable organisations who require funding. I can recommend to Members the Community Development Foundation website for more information on how they can assist (www.countydurhamfoundation.co.uk).

Meetings/Presentations

10. In my capacity as Leader I have attended a number of meetings including the Durham Tees Valley Airport Board; Tees Valley Leaders/Chief Executives; City and Town Summit; presentations to members on Foundation Trusts and Local Housing Assessment and the official opening of the South Park.

John Williams
Leader