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**OVERVIEW OF LEISURE PORTFOLIO**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. During the last eight-week cycle, the following were the main areas of work under my Leisure Portfolio:

**Dolphin Centre Refurbishment**

2. Following a £5M refurbishment, the Dolphin Centre officially re-opened to the public on the weekend of 15/16 December 2006. The refurbishment works have been carried out over a 38-week period. A major feature of the refurbishment programme has been to ensure that the Centre has remained open to the public for mainstream activity. The Centre received 400,000 visits and large support from user groups and casual users during the construction phase.
3. The major features of the new facilities within the Dolphin Centre include the ‘Under the Sea’ soft play area with sensory provision, a continental style bar/bistro, refurbished wet and dry changing facilities, a new Register Office and Ceremony Rooms, refurbished reception/customer services and box office facilities, new fitness studio and 16 Horsemarket a ground floor café bar that will incorporate pavement café during the summer months.
4. The re-opening launch weekend incorporated a family fun weekend aimed at welcoming existing and new users to showcase the refurbished facilities. Alpha FM broadcast from main reception and the activities over the two days included spot prizes, Santa Claus, tours of the centre, demonstrations of fitness classes, streetwalkers, balloon modellers, children’s competitions and promotional visits from the cast of the pantomime. The customer feedback was very positive.

**Christmas Events**

**Christmas lights switch on - 19 November 2006**

5. Denise Welch, one of the stars from this year’s Christmas Pantomime at the Civic Theatre, switched on the Christmas lights held in Darlington’s market square. Alpha Radio and local band “Black Shirt Jazz” provided the entertainment throughout the afternoon before Santa arrived on his motorbike. Darrien Wright made a special appearance. The event culminated in a fireworks finale.

**Christmas Street Art**

6. Working in partnership with the Town Centre Management, the Leisure and Arts Events Team have programmed music and street theatre to entertain shoppers and promote Christmas. Entertainment includes a selection of music on High Row, festive walkabouts

and shows. A carol service is planned for Saturday 23 December 2006 with singers from local schools and Stagecoach Dance School.

### **Christmas Special, South Park Café, Sunday 17 December 2006**

7. Young children were invited to meet Santa and enjoy the balloon modeller whilst the adults could relax over some traditional fayre at the South Park Café.

### **Arts Development**

#### **“Full on futures” at the Education Village**

8. On 13 – 17 November 2006 the “Full on Futures” event took place in conjunction with the Beaumont Hill Special School’s vocational status launch. Carolyn Barker and Josie Stewart organised a range of creative, enterprising and inspiring talks, presentations, activities, performances and workshops at the Education Village during the government initiated enterprise week. A broad range of creative industries were represented as a variety of businesses, local to the North East, were being asked to demonstrate and share their creative and business professionalism. Activities included a week-long competitive business task for all year 10 pupils and performance workshops in dance, drama and aerial trapeze for lower school pupils. Approximately 600 children took part over the week. Creative Partnerships and Beaumont Hill School funded the event.

### **Harrowgate Hill Young People’s Urban Arts Project**

9. Darlington Arts Development in partnership with Youth Services and Longfield School Sports College performed a series of workshops for young people aged 13 – 19 years from the Harrowgate Hill area. The workshops have been running from 21 November 2006 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. There are opportunities to try street and break dancing, drumming, DJ-ing and mural arts with local artists. The workshops are free of charge and the young people can try one or more of the activities. A team of 11 artists, 3 youth workers and 2 arts officers have been involved in the delivery of the project.

### **Saturday 9 and 16 December 2006 - Young People of Lascelles Park**

10. Youth Services and the Arts Service have commissioned an experienced visual artist to deliver sessions on urban/graffiti arts to the young people of Lascelles at St John’s School.

### **Arts Centre Courses**

11. In December Darrien Wright led a series of workshops at the Arts Centre. Children from across Darlington attended a workshop in the afternoons to introduce them to high-energy dance and movement. This is in preparation for a short residency from Darrien in May 2007
12. A new term for weekly adult and children courses start in January 2007. These courses aim to offer opportunities for engagement in a variety of arts forms with opportunities to develop skills and interests. Classes on offer include youth dance courses, stained glass courses, ceramics and textiles courses.

## **Arts Centre Refurbishment**

13. The driveway to the Arts Centre has now been converted into a Plaza area. This has been partially created by using reclaimed stone from the market place. The walkway to the entrance of the building is partially lit from L.E.D lights sunken into the stone. In 2007 it is proposed that the area extends further opportunities in outdoor performance and enhance the bar and catering provision. Angela Conner, a renowned international public artist is preparing an exciting water sculpture for the Centre, which will complement the customer journey into the building.
14. Plans are currently underway to begin work on the entrance/foyer area in the Arts Centre. Work will start on the next phase in early January 2007.

## **Community Sports/Sport Development**

### **Sports Winners Scheme**

15. The Darlington Sports Winners Scheme celebrated another year of rewarding achievement and progress in sports at all levels throughout Darlington. The Grand Final was held in the Dolphin Centre Central Hall on Wednesday, 6 December 2006. Awards were presented on the evening for Service to Sport, Special Achievement, Young Sports Achiever and the Team Club Award. Over 100 people attended the evening and the committee is already planning the 2007 scheme.

### **Sports Development**

16. The Sports Development Coachwide Database has been launched to assist schools, clubs, community groups and leisure providers to access qualified sports coaches. The scheme ensures sports coaches have the necessary qualifications, are CRB checked and meet the Council's criteria for coaching before being entered on the database. The response has been excellent and there are already over 20 coaches signed up on the database
17. A new Sport and Physical Activity Officer, funded through Sport England, will be appointed in December and will work within the Sports Development Team. The post will focus on increasing participation and widening access through Sport England's 'Single Delivery System' for Sport.

### **Extended Schools Programme**

18. As part of the Extended Schools Programme for the Longfield Cluster, activities such as skiing, snowboarding, climbing, white-water rafting, Bollywood Dance and archery have taken place throughout December with around 120 different children and young people taking part. These activities will continue in the New Year along with some sport specific after-school clubs such as trampolining, volleyball, kwik cricket and tag rugby. An outdoor club and leadership award are also planned.

### **Community Sports**

19. The Sports Development team have achieved all of the community-based performance indicators within the Longfield Sports College Bid with two years of the project still to run. The indicators focused mainly on Coach and Volunteer development. All targets have

increased by over 100% in year two, meaning that targets set for the four-year period have already been achieved.

### **Zone Active**

20. The half yearly figures for the main key performance indicators of the Zone Active project are very positive. In the last six months, 256 new members have been attracted to the project with a throughput of 3,293 people being achieved. (Throughput is the total number of participants in each activity or session totalled for the month.) This counts the number of places or heads for every activity on every day of the month and adds them together. An individual can appear several times). The target of 1,000 people per year has been almost trebled in only six months.

### **Lifestyle on Referral Scheme**

21. Following on from an extensive review, the Lifestyle on Referral course, now re-branded as “Darlington One Life”, is starting on 15 January 2007. Each exercise on referral course within the Dolphin Centre will last for 12 weeks, with a new course beginning every 6 weeks. There is capacity on the courses to cater for 90 patients on each 12-week course. In addition to the traditional exercise on referral, there are also classes on chronic back pain, obesity and a mental health fitness class, all are in a community-based setting. Arts on Referral has been developed to enable a broader menu of choices for patients and will include sessions at Darlington Arts Centre and the Music Forum.

### **Sponsorship and Marketing**

#### **Sponsorship**

22. ‘Roman’ have agreed to continue sponsorship of the Northern Sinfonia to enable them to perform in Darlington next year.

#### **Marketing**

23. At the beginning of December, the Leisure and Arts marketing team launched the new “What’s on?” brochure for Spring Season 2007. The new season offers a wide choice of music, drama, musicals and comedy at both the Civic Theatre and the Arts Centre.
24. Darlington Civic Theatre’s pantomime this year is proving to be hugely popular. The show stars Denise Welch and the Krankies.
25. Two new Box Offices will open in December. One in the Cornmill Shopping Centre, the other in the newly refurbished Dolphin Centre, providing a prime town centre location from which to sell tickets and offer information for a variety of theatre, arts and events. The Box Office will be open Monday – Saturday 10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

#### **Library Activities**

26. We have been dealing with an increase in the demand for internet access due to number of Polish workers in Darlington. We now have over 400 Polish people registered with the library. We are working with a range of partners to ensure that the needs of this community are met and are currently arranging English language classes to be held at Crown Street

library.

27. We have completed the adult user survey which is conducted every 3 years. This is a national survey which contributes to the library performance indicators. A full report will be issued once the figures are qualified but initial indications are that we are one of the best performing libraries for public satisfaction
28. Work continues at Crown Street library to improve the building and make it safe. The authority has released funding for a new fire alarm system and we are currently working on the risk assessments and work plan to ensure minimal disruption to the public.
29. Our provision at the Coleridge Centre continues to grow and we are now receiving very positive feedback from learners who have attended courses there. This is particularly satisfying as some of the learners did not want to go to Skerne Park but now are very happy to go back.

### **Events**

30. “Santa at the Station” took place over the first three weekends in December. This year, the operation was indoors, with a miniature railway individually transporting children the length of the building for their visits to Santa. Over the six days, 703 children visited Santa, an increase of 14% over the previous year; overall numbers, at 1471, were up by 8.8%.

### **Education**

31. Over 1,100 schoolchildren visited the museum during the autumn term. Museum staff are currently working with the Library Service on “One Book for Darlington”, a literacy development project due to take place in January and February and based around *The Railway Children*. The project will conclude with a celebration event at the museum over the weekend of 18-19 February.

### **Study Centre and Collections**

32. The museum continues to receive interesting and worthwhile donations from members of the public. A recent picture story in the *Echo* featured some recent donations and has generated a number of further offers. Another story the same day sought to promote use of the Study Centre by local residents, against the background of two grants totalling £4,000 recently awarded to help improve the storage of plans and drawings.

### **Volunteers**

33. The museum’s volunteer workforce continues to grow and to diversify in terms of its interests and mix. Detailed planning is currently underway on an Oral History Project, which is being run jointly between the Tees Valley Hub and the Friends. This project will record the memories of people and their families who worked at North Road Shops, Stivvies, Faverdale and Stooperdale Offices.

**Councillor Lee Vasey**  
**Cabinet Member with Leisure Portfolio**