
DARLINGTON PARTNERSHIP – TANGIBLE POSITIVE OUTCOMES

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To highlight some of the key positive outcomes achieved by Darlington Partnership.

Summary

2. This report outlines the background to Darlington Partnership, describes its purpose and describes three tangible, positive outcomes it has achieved.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that Members receive this report for information.

**MURRAY ROSE
DIRECTOR, SERVICES FOR PEOPLE**

Background Papers

Seth Pearson, Ext 2462

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Health and Well Being
Carbon Impact	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Carbon Impact
Diversity	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Diversity
Wards Affected	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on specific Wards
Groups Affected	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Groups
Budget and Policy Framework	This report outlines how the Council discharges

	the core function outlined in its Corporate Plan to “Support strong partnerships to set a vision and direction for the Borough”
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report outlines the primary means by which the Council engages with partners to deliver One Darlington : Perfectly Placed
Efficiency	The report highlights how other public agencies and other sectors are engaged to support the Council in addressing the needs of the residents of Darlington through agreed priorities.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

4. Darlington Partnership has only two purposes: to enable a common understanding of the priorities for Darlington to be reached across the broadest range of stakeholders as possible and to ensure effective, concerted action is being taken to address them.
5. It has no democratic authority and it has no money and neither does it seek either. What it has is moral authority and what it does is influence and organise.
6. The expression of the priorities for Darlington is through One Darlington: Perfectly Placed and the suite of delivery plans that sit under it. This paper will outline the considerable success the Partnership has had in achieving the outcomes and objectives expressed in One Darlington Perfectly Placed and the consequence of that success.
7. More recently, in response to a changed environment, the Partnership has instigated more direct action to address priorities which have better engaged other sectors than just the public sector. This paper also describes two notable successes it has had in developing this direct action.
8. Though not explored in this paper there is a fundamental, abiding value in the Partnership. It is a space where core values of respect, openness and a willingness to act are held by its members. This is precious and if lost would be very difficult to recreate. What it means is that when an issue arises which affects Darlington a united position can be reached extremely quickly. It has enabled the Partnership to rally swiftly in support of the Council on numerous occasions. For example: as a consequence of the emergency budget in 2010 public sector agencies were in the process of cutting budgets. Through the Partnership the public sector agencies of Darlington when making cuts committed to work collaboratively to mitigate impacts and maintain a focus on One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. This not only established a positive precedent but gave a reassuring public message. In addition, as public agencies were making redundancies the Chairman, Alasdair MacConachie, wrote on behalf of the Partnership to every business in Darlington urging them to consider ex-public sector workers when recruiting.
9. Darlington Partnership grew out of the Employers' Forum, formed in 1992 by Darlington's M.P. and the Leader of the Council to engage and work with the main private sector companies in Darlington. The forum was renamed and launched by Tony Blair as Darlington Partnership in 1997, to provide a formal interface between the new unitary Borough Council and the private sector. Its primary task was to promote the borough as a place to do business and stimulate economic development.
10. Darlington Partnership was seen as a model of good practice by government when it decided that Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) should be set up in all parts of the country, and the Partnership became the LSP for Darlington. The Partnership

at this point was specifically structured to support the delivery of One Darlington Perfectly Placed, the Sustainable Community Strategy.

11. The context for partnership working and the landscape around it rapidly changed with the change of government in May 2010. The machinery with which local strategic partnerships had been conducting their business such as Local Area Agreements and National Indicators as a measure of progress were removed soon after the Coalition Government came into power.
12. In response to this change in landscape and substantial cuts in public spending the Partnership agreed in March 2011 to review the purpose of the Partnership and its governance structure. The Partnership Board reaffirmed its commitment to delivering One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, but in addition, aimed to develop contribution from a broader range of people and to target that contribution directly at priorities.
13. To reflect this change in focus this report will outline three tangible positive outcomes:
 - (a) Successful oversight of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.
 - (b) Establishing a successful project focused on a Partnership 'Action Priority' – The Foundation for Jobs.
 - (c) Creating a vehicle to harness and increase employer supported volunteering and corporate social responsibility activity - Darlington Cares.

Successful oversight of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed

14. The Sustainable Community Strategy, One Darlington: Perfectly Placed represents the longer term vision for Darlington. Darlington Partnership is responsible for enabling the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to focus on achieving its outcomes and ambitions.
15. Up until 2010 the Audit Commission was tasked with carrying out Comprehensive Area Assessments through an independent assessment by six inspectorates, to judge how well local public services were working together in meeting the needs of the people they serve and tackling the major issues faced.
16. The last full Comprehensive Area Assessment of Darlington was published in December 2009. The assessment found many positive things to comment on and no areas where there were significant concerns or where action was needed. It noted that the impact of the recession had been limited by the number of new employers and new jobs that had been brought into the area and that 'Into Work' programmes were making progress in improving employment rates. Educational standards were improving. Progress was being made in helping people live healthier lives. People in Darlington were happy with the local area. The number of people using cars had reduced and crime had reduced.
17. Throughout, the Partnership is referenced as contributing to this. For example

- (a) "The Partnership is working to improve the skills of the work force to make them more employable."
 - (b) "Darlington Partnership – the Local Strategic Partnership has recognised the vital importance of improving the prospects for all young people in the area as part of achieving its vision for the borough."
 - (c) "The Local Strategic Partnership understands and is taking action to tackle the important health issues in Darlington."
 - (d) "The Darlington Partnership has also been good at encouraging and introducing environmentally friendly approaches to travel and transport."
 - (e) "The Local Strategic Partnership works well to tackle crime and anti social behaviour and improvements are likely to continue."
18. The Sustainable Community Strategy had been delivered through Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Under the previous government targets would be agreed with government and their achievement would be financially rewarded.
19. The Pilot LAA concluded at the end of March 2009, with a total of £1,854,456 reward element having been achieved. As a consequence of the emergency budget of 2010 a proportion of the reward grant was withheld. However the Council received £927,245 of Performance Reward Grant monies as a result of the achievement of objectives within the Local Area Agreement.
20. The independent review of the LAA published in June 2009 found that:

"A host of positive headline impacts and the overall outputs and impact measures, including the exceeding of stretch targets, indicate a high degree of impact achieved through the pilot LAA programme. As such it has successfully addressed local priority issues and accelerated 'performance catch-up' in some problem areas related to educational attainment across Key Stage 2 and 3, school exclusions, absenteeism, teenage pregnancy and youth offending."

ERS Research and Consultancy

21. The work to successfully deliver the LAA was undertaken by partnership activity through the Darlington Partnership.
22. Darlington Partnership has therefore been recognised under inspection as responsible for agreement being reached on shared priorities and targets and for agencies working well together. The consequence of achieving targets through this partnership activity has been improved outcomes for Darlington residents. One of the additional tangible benefits of this has been to secure additional resources for Darlington.

Establishing a successful project focused on a Partnership 'Action Priority' – The Foundation for Jobs

23. At its meeting in September 2011, the Partnership Board agreed that it will focus on only a small number of annual Action Priorities, which rely on the contributions of each sector, private, public, voluntary and community and which can make a

measurable impact in the short term. Its Action Priorities for 2012 are:

- (a) Giving our young people a better chance of getting a job
- (b) The harm caused to our community through the misuse of alcohol
- (c) Ensuring the elderly in our community are well supported

24. Good progress is being made in the development of actions which address each Action Priority and significant achievements have been made in developing vocational opportunities for young people which is receiving local, regional and national recognition.
25. Following a discussion at the Board meeting of 9th November 2011, Darlington Partnership launched the Darlington Foundation for Jobs at Lingfield Point on Thursday 26th January 2012. The initiative will run throughout 2012 and beyond and aims to give young people a better chance of finding work by developing more effective links between schools, colleges, universities and employers to help young people get a better understanding of the world of work and to get better connected with local employers. 30 employers pledged their support at the launch event and many more have subsequently.
26. The Rt Rev Justin Welby, Bishop of Durham is the patron of the Darlington Foundation for Jobs and is fully committed to the initiative. Equally committed is Peter Barron, Editor of the Northern Echo, who has committed to run a year long campaign showcasing young people who are eager to work and examples of companies who are putting forward opportunities.
27. A key feature of the initiative has been the establishment of hard targets to be achieved within the year as follows
- (a) The creation of 100 apprenticeships for Darlington Borough residents by end of March 2013.
 - (b) The creation of 100 internships or work experience placements for Darlington Borough residents by end of March 2013.
 - (c) Ensuring 1,000 young people at Darlington Schools and colleges have meaningful contact with industry by end of March 2013.
 - (d) At least 50 Darlington Borough residents are given entrepreneurial skills training by end of March 2013.
28. The project is being overseen by a steering group which is chaired by Councillor McEwan on behalf of Darlington Partnership and involves representatives of local businesses, schools, local colleges and Teesside University. The use of Performance Reward Grant has enabled a coordinator to be appointed.
29. To date the following progress has been made towards the targets for 2012/13:

Month	April 2012	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2013	Feb	March
Apprentices	18	35	47	54	55*							
Interns	25	60	75	79	82	91						
School links	80	80	110	227	232							

Entrepreneur skills	30	30	60	62	66								
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*An additional 25 apprenticeships are currently agreed

Pre-planned events and schools requests for activities will take the numbers involved in school links with business to between 600 and 700 by mid-November.

30. Darlington Borough Council has been instrumental in ensuring the initiative has come to fruition. However Darlington Partnership is responsible for conceiving and launching the project, engaging employers and fostering the widespread support the project continues to enjoy. The network of pre existing strong relationships within the partnership has been critical in its swift and successful development. The major tangible benefits of the initiative will be felt by the young people of Darlington who are now in employment as a result of this Darlington Partnership initiative.

Creating a vehicle to harness and increase employer supported volunteering and corporate social responsibility activity – Darlington Cares

31. Darlington Partnership Board, at it meeting in May 2012, considered a paper which explored how the corporate social responsibility activities of employers in Darlington could be better pooled and aligned in addressing the needs of local communities. A steering group was formed and led by the private sector which concluded that a ‘CARES’ scheme, based on a Business in the Community model would be most effective and has subsequently driven forward action to instigate it. Darlington Cares Board sat for the first time in September 2012.
32. Darlington CARES will assist businesses and other local employers to fulfil their corporate social responsibility commitments by identifying local projects to get involved in. It will bring together the skills and expertise of businesses, local employers and their employees to make a positive difference to the local community through a range of initiatives, including:
- (a) Flash mobs – bringing together a massed body of volunteers to undertake an endeavour in a short space of time which responds to a community need or ambition.
 - (b) Team challenges – practical projects completed by teams of business volunteers to improve the local community, while providing opportunities to develop team building, improve staff morale, leadership and personal development.
 - (c) Enterprise hubs – connecting business experts to voluntary organisations with the aim of helping them plan and organise their operations to deliver the greatest benefit to their clients whilst ensuring they are secure and sustainable as organisations.
 - (d) National programmes such as ‘Right to Read’ which offer volunteers from business the opportunity to support students in their literacy development, while improving their confidence, communication skills and attitude towards reading.

33. The objectives of the initiative are to
- (a) Increase the benefit to the communities of Darlington from local companies' corporate social responsibility activity
 - (b) Engage more businesses in employer supported volunteering (ESV)
 - (c) Increase numbers of volunteers.
34. The aim for Darlington CARES is to be fully funded by contributions from its membership. The target for the first year's contributions from other than the Council was set at £25,000 which has been exceeded with a total of £30,000 having been pledged. To allow Darlington CARES time to build up its membership to a point where it can self sustain, up to £100,000 of Performance Reward Grant has been approved by Darlington Borough Council's cabinet following approval by the Darlington Partnership Board.
35. Five of the larger employers in Darlington have joined Teesside University and Darlington Borough Council to form the Board of Darlington Cares and committed to an annual contribution towards the running costs. The Board met for the first time on September 25th.
36. Teesside University have agreed to host the initiative, providing accommodation at their Darlington campus and acting as the employer for the Programme Manager. A successful recruitment process has taken place during August and September and a Programme Manager has been appointed and will take up post on 22nd October.
37. For Darlington Partnership, Darlington CARES offers a great opportunity to work in a more effective manner with businesses in Darlington to address shared priorities.
38. The experience of other areas suggests that Darlington CARES will lever in considerably more resource from local business than currently and that by coordinating it the benefit accrued by the community will be increased exponentially. At a time of dwindling public resource Darlington CARES represents an important opportunity for Darlington Borough Council and other public agencies to gain the support of the private sector in addressing the needs of Darlington's communities. Darlington CARES would not have come about without Darlington Partnership.

Future work of Darlington Partnership

39. Looking forward Darlington Partnership continues to support Darlington Borough Council in aligning priorities and coordinating action through the One Darlington Perfectly Placed Delivery Plan.
40. Assemblies are a valuable means of engaging a broader range of individuals in considering important issues that face Darlington. Not only do they connect the Partnership to a broader constituency but by engaging with a wider cross section of people they have generated fresh ideas and possible solutions. At its next meeting Darlington Partnership Board, guided by policy advice of Darlington Borough Council, will agree the focus of the next Assembly.

41. In January the Partnership Board will review its Action Priorities and consider what it should focus on for the forthcoming year. Again very much guided by Darlington Borough Council's understanding of the priorities faced by Darlington.

Conclusion

42. Darlington Partnership has long been recognised as a model of good practice in partnership working and there is an abiding value in the culture of collaboration it represents. This collaboration continues to provide positive tangible outcomes.
43. The first tangible benefit it provides is as an effective vehicle for agreeing a vision and priorities for Darlington and to ensure effective, concerted action is being taken to address them. The success it has had in this can be evidenced by the outcomes it has achieved which have been confirmed by independent external assessment.
44. More recently it has focused on a small number of annual Action Priorities and triggered cross sector action to address them. This is resulting in more immediate tangible benefits. For instance a range of new vocational opportunities are now available for Darlington's young people.
45. Darlington Partnership is developing new models to support the contribution of all sectors of the community to contribute to agreed priorities. For instance a new organisation which harnesses and focuses local employers corporate social responsibility activity has just been formed which has the opportunity of significantly increasing the benefit felt by local communities

Outcome of Consultation

46. No consultation is necessary as this report is for information only.