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**DARLINGTON PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update on the progress of Darlington Partnership since November 2014.

**Summary**

2. Since November 2014 Darlington Partnership has ensured that the projects it has established have continued to deliver effectively. In addition the Partnership is taking forward work in other areas important to the borough where collaboration is essential.

**Recommendation**

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

**Seth Pearson**  
**Partnership Director**

Partnership Director Seth Pearson  
Extension 6090

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 Caron 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

### Action Priorities

4. The Partnership Board agreed in September 2011 that, in addition to oversight of the delivery of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, it would focus on only a limited number of ‘Action Priorities’, the aim being to instigate action which visibly addressed issues facing Darlington.
5. The move to develop Action Priorities responded to the call of private sector representatives on the Board who had found the business of the Partnership to that point very public sector driven and didn’t provide opportunities for them to contribute.

6. The process for identifying Action Priorities occurs annually and starts with an analysis of Darlington's Single Needs Assessment. The Partnership Board draws from this a long list of issues which either give rise to particular concern or present opportunities for Darlington.
7. The criteria used are:
  - (a) is the issue significant;
  - (b) would addressing it rely on the contributions of each sector, private, public, voluntary and community; and
  - (c) could a measurable impact be made in the short term (twelve months)

## **Initiatives:**

### **Foundation for Jobs**

8. The Action Priorities process has led to some significant successes. The Foundation for Jobs initiative which won an MJ Award in 2012 was a Partnership response to youth unemployment which it had identified as an Action Priority.
9. The Foundation for Jobs Programme is a range of activities which directly increase vocational opportunities for young people in Darlington. It is a Darlington Partnership initiative which capitalises on the partnership's strong networks to stimulate Darlington's employers to sign up to Foundation commitments and to foster alliances with schools and other public sector providers.
10. Since Foundation for Jobs was launched in April 2012 to tackle youth unemployment it has worked with more than 4,800 young people, aged up to 24, in Darlington. They include 443 new apprentices, 3795 school age pupils building closer links with industry, 509 young people taking part in internships or eight-week work experience placements and 66 young people developing entrepreneurial skills.

### **Good Friends**

11. In 2013, the Partnership had set as its single Action Priority establishing a good neighbour scheme. This was the conclusion of much discussion within the Partnership around how to encourage communities to be more self-reliant as public services recede. A concern from the previous year's Action Priority programme was the plight of elderly and vulnerable people, living often lonely and isolated.
12. The initiative involves a network of Good Friends keeping a watchful eye on their older and vulnerable neighbours, providing support and friendship and assisting them with a range of issues which if left unaddressed could compromise their ability to live safely and well independently. They make brief contact to check up on vulnerable people who live nearby but will escalate the contact during known difficult times e.g. cold weather or when alerted to a specific problem.

13. The potential for the initiative to improve elderly and vulnerable people's quality of life are self-evident. However reducing demand on public service and avoiding cost has been an objective of the initiative from the outset.
14. The scheme is supported by the following agencies who, after receiving an evaluation report, committed to an additional years funding in January this year.
  - (a) Darlington Borough Council;
  - (b) Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust;
  - (c) Tees Esk and Wear Valley Foundation Trust;
  - (d) Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group; and
  - (e) Durham Constabulary
15. Now there are over 750 Good Friends recruited supporting over 460 neighbours.
16. The Good Friends initiative won an award in March at the Local Government Chronicle Awards. The judging panel commented that 'It demonstrates brilliant partnership working between the Council, two NHS Trusts, the Clinical Commissioning Group, the Police, Age UK and Neighbourhood Watch. Judges were impressed with the way it developed users into advocates and mobilised the local community.'

### **Darlington Cares**

17. In May 2012 Darlington Partnership Board determined to find a way to help local employers to pool and align their corporate social responsibility activities in addressing the needs of local communities. A group led by a committed private sector member of Darlington Partnership formed to develop the idea.
18. Five of the larger employers in Darlington 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 2012. Teesside University host the initiative which was launched in October 2012, providing accommodation at their Darlington campus and acting as the employer for the Programme Manager.
19. 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 corporate social responsibility activity; and
  - (c) Increase numbers of volunteers in Darlington.
20. Darlington CARES has now grown to a membership of 22 employers and is fully funded by contributions from its membership. The initiatives it delivers range from

a 'busy readers' scheme supporting school children with their literacy skills to providing volunteer technicians for 'Bike Stop', a cycle sale and repair shop which provides employment opportunities for homeless people.

21. Following a review in January this year the delivery areas have been revised to align with the revised One Darlington: Perfectly Placed strategy and to address the following outcomes:

- (a) Children with the best start in life;
- (b) More people caring for our environment; and
- (c) Enough support for people when needed.

22. The current programmes are included under these priorities as follows:

(a) Getting the best start in life

- (i) Busy Readers (which trains volunteers to listen to children read in primary schools);
- (ii) Ready for Work (supports year 10 pupils with the development of their employability skills, CV's and interview techniques);
- (iii) Employability mentoring (supports second year students at the QE Sixth Form College who are considering full time employment or an apprenticeship after their studies helping with job applications, CV's, interview techniques, work place behaviour and develops their awareness of the range of career options available.

(b) Caring for the environment

- (i) Re-thinking Parks (Darlington Cares support Groundwork with their project aimed at developing ways of sustaining green spaces. The project is focused on three of Darlington's parks: North Park, South Park and the Denes).

(c) Supporting people when needed

- (i) The main focus of this is via the skills hub\*, supporting agencies and charities who work with those in need, including First Stop, Food Store Network, Darlington CAB, Age UK Darlington, Darlington Credit Union.
- (ii) Minded to Help (a peer support network to share their good practice, policies and procedures for the benefit of the mental well-being of the Darlington employees); and
- (iii) Red Hall - With Groundwork now appointed to coordinate the community projects, Darlington Cares is brokering the engagement of its member businesses in the proposed projects.

23. It has delivered:
- (a) 5,000 hours of employee supported volunteering;
  - (b) Over 45 successful projects;
  - (c) Over 2,000 school children have benefited from the additional volunteer support of Busy Readers;
  - (d) 85 Busy Reader volunteers trained;
  - (e) 800 young people have benefited from employability skills support and;
  - (f) Over 20 members
24. Darlington Cares provides a vehicle for employers to support the community that they are a part of. It gives Darlington Borough Council an opportunity to engage with employers in a dialogue about the issues facing Darlington and how they can help.

### **Financial Inclusion Action Group**

25. In response to issues discussed at the Partnership's Prosperity for All Conference held last November a Financial Inclusion Action Group has been established.
26. The Group met for the first time in March and includes representatives from Darlington Building Society, DWP, FinCan (regional financial capability), Food Store, Credit Union, CAB as well as Council staff. The Group is chaired by Kate Roe of Darlington College. The Group has established a set of action priorities based around the three key themes identified by the regional group of:
- (a) *Having Enough:*  
income levels, benefits maximisation and the impact of Welfare Reform
  - (b) *Being Included:*  
which covers the access and availability of appropriate products and services including lending and insurance
  - (c) *Capability:*  
which identifies the need for work to support good saving habits, shopping around and understanding of the financial market.
27. The Action Priorities Identified by the Local Group are:
- (a) Maximise the take up of benefits in Darlington;
  - (b) Provide accessible and high quality financial advice;
  - (c) Reduce the level of unsustainable personal debt in the Borough;

- (d) Support the use of appropriate low cost forms of lending and purchasing;
  - (e) Deter the promotion and sale of exploitative or high cost products, lending and services (including energy, appliances, loans, insurances and guarantees);
  - (f) Support preventative tactics in relation to avoidable debt and financial crises; and
  - (g) Promote and support the development of saving, financial planning and awareness and understanding of financial products.
28. A report considered at the first meeting of the Financial Inclusion Action Group revealed that both nationally and locally there is evidence that there has been an increase in debt and financial exclusion.
29. There has been a steep rise in the number of people in Darlington seeking help with debt; a rise in the number of people using crisis support including the Food Store and a significant number of people using prepayment meters, which a strong indicator of financial exclusion. There are specific geographic concentrations of people struggling with these issues in Darlington.
30. Low income is the most common cause of financial exclusion. There are particular groups of out of work benefit claimants and means tested benefit claimants who are at significant risk of financial exclusion.
31. Poor financial capability compounds financial exclusion. People most likely to have poor financial capability are younger people, those on low incomes and those with poor levels of education.
32. Darlington has a high preponderance of employment types associated with low pay and therefore potentially relatively high numbers of people suffering from in work poverty. People on low incomes have limited access to the range of financial options.
33. Some groups are completely financially excluded due to, for instance, poor credit ratings or a criminal record. Low income households without savings or insurance are more vulnerable to financial difficulties following a shock or trigger event.
34. There is therefore a significant issue of financial exclusion in Darlington. Some groups are more vulnerable, particularly those on low incomes. Availability of affordable financial products for those excluded is an important issue which can generate further debt. Financial capability is also a factor in the issues faced.

### **Advice Network**

35. An early development as a consequence of the Financial Inclusion Action Group is the establishment of an online advice portal. Advice providers in Darlington are collaborating to produce a 'smart index' and portal. The aim of the website is to provide a single local gateway to advice, along with details of local events (e.g. public training, advice days etc.) and links to the wider national resources that are

available. The website is designed for both local residents to access directly, but also for volunteers and staff in the local advice organisations.

36. The website is in its final stages of design and will be publicised shortly.

### **One Darlington Magazine**

37. A new community magazine is being produced on a bi-monthly basis which started in September 2015 called One Darlington and is led by Darlington Partnership.

38. It contains regular contributions from a number of funding partners (see below) and has a loose theme associated with each edition.

39. The Darlington Partnership website has been re-designed to reflect the design and content of the One Darlington magazine, and hosts a digital version of the magazine. Work on the website is scheduled to begin towards the end of July.

40. Darlington Borough Council has agreed with Newsquest that the Darlington Together magazine will no longer be produced.

41. The current partners are;

- (a) Darlington Partnership;
- (b) Darlington Borough Council;
- (c) CCG (subject to final sign off);
- (d) County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust;
- (e) Darlington Cares;
- (f) Darlington College (subject to final sign off);
- (g) Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service;
- (h) Durham Constabulary;
- (i) Durham Police and Crime Commissioner; and
- (j) Tees Esk and Wear Valley Foundation Trust

42. The magazine has been well received by residents of Darlington and is considered a success by the partners involved.

### **Partnership Assemblies**

#### **Darlington - A Culture of Ingenuity**

43. On Monday 19 October, 2015, 150 delegates from across the region gathered at the Dolphin Centre's Central Hall to debate and shape an engaging, inspiring and



inclusive cultural offer for the future of Darlington as it looks towards the 2025 celebration of the birth of the railway and the Tees Valley bid for capital of culture plus nearer opportunities like the refurbishment of the Civic Theatre and the ongoing success of the Festival of Thrift.

44. The overall purpose of the event is to engage, enlighten and enthuse local and regional stakeholders with the objectives being to:
  - (a) reach a shared understanding of how culture can play a role in the economic development of Darlington;
  - (b) recognise, celebrate and support the existing cultural activity in Darlington;
  - (c) agree a vision for Darlington's cultural offer of the future as part of the Tees Valley Culture; and
  - (d) Launch a programme of Partnership activity towards 2025.

## **Future Activity**

### **Ingenious Fair**

45. Following a discussion at the Darlington Partnership Executive it was agreed to establish an annual 'Ingenious Fair'.
46. A new brand for Darlington has been developed by a group of senior local business representatives aided by the Council predominantly to support inward investment. The brand has been adopted by a significant number of businesses in Darlington following a 'soft launch'. A major launch is planned for next year. In developing the brand 'authenticity' has been a key concern: that local people can identify with the brand.
47. In addition, the importance of a strong cultural offer to the economy has risen in prominence with a North East Strategy recently launched and a Tees Valley Capital of Culture bid for 2025 announced. 2025 is also the year marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of the passenger railway in Darlington with significant events already being proposed for that year.
48. The event will be held annually and in future years there will be an increasing focus on the railway.
49. The intention is that the cost of the event will be entirely covered by sponsorship and charges for concessions.
50. So as not to clash with The Festival Of Thrift it is proposed that the event would be held at the start of summer.
51. Involving young people and schools will be important and Foundation for Jobs events will be a core element of the event. Therefore it will be a two day event held on Friday 8th and Saturday 9th July. On the Friday teams of children from schools will be involved in some of the activities already being delivered by Foundation for

Jobs but also including challenges and competitions around the theme of Ingenuity involving local businesses. Saturday will be a fair which again will give an opportunity for local manufacturers to showcase what they do.

### **Best of Darlington**

52. Nominations will open in January for the Best of Darlington Awards which return in 2016 for the eleventh year. This annual celebration of the hard work and achievement of individuals and businesses across Darlington gives residents the opportunity to nominate in award categories including Volunteer of the Year, Exceptional Student and Putting Darlington on the Map.

53. The 2015 awards received a record number of nominations which saw winners including David Ward, Street Champion, for his Contribution to the Environment and the Centre for Process Innovation Limited (CPI) who received the accolade for Bringing Success to Darlington. New for 2016 is the Public Sector Hero category.

54. Categories for this year are :

- (a) Contribution to Sport;
- (b) Performance in Sport;
- (c) Volunteer of the Year;
- (d) Contribution to the Community;
- (e) Young Person's Contribution to the Community;
- (f) Vocational Excellence;
- (g) Academic Excellence;
- (h) Exceptional Student;
- (i) Contribution to the Environment;
- (j) Contribution to the Arts;
- (k) Public Sector Hero;
- (l) Business – Contribution to the Community;
- (m) Business – Bringing Success to Darlington; and
- (n) Putting Darlington on the Map.

55. The Awards Ceremony will be held on 6 May 2016.