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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Economy and Regeneration Portfolio :-

**Warm Up North**

2. Warm Up North is the Council's response to the Green Deal and a regional initiative to deliver energy efficiency and carbon reduction improvements to domestic and non-domestic public buildings in Darlington. The lead Local Authority is Newcastle and it is currently procuring a preferred Green Deal provider and seeking to confirm the appointment by March 2013. Three current tenderers are being evaluated as the preferred Green Deal provider, a combination of consortium bids and bids led by national utility bodies. The Warm Up North programme will be formally launched in June / July 2013 with a minimum commitment of 1500 properties to be improved over a three year period.

**Darlington Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

3. The Planning Obligations SPD sets out a new consistent and transparent approach to efficiently and effectively secure planning obligations from new development taking into account local land values Borough-wide and other costs associated with development. This will ensure that the impact of new development is mitigated whilst ensuring that landowners and developers can still secure competitive returns from the delivered development. All responses to the SPD consultation were considered and, where appropriate, changes made. Cabinet recommended to Council that the contents of the SPD be agreed; that the Planning Obligations Planning document be adopted; and that the transitional arrangements to accommodate developers already in re-applications discussions with the Council be agreed. This item is on the agenda for this meeting of Council requesting that the Planning Obligations Planning Documents be adopted as Council Policy.

**Private Sector Housing: Restaurant Owner and Landlord Prosecuted**

4. A landlord and restaurant owner was prosecuted on 28 November 2012 for housing tenants above and below the restaurant in squalid and unsafe housing conditions. Tenants were found to have little or no amenities to wash or cook and there was a complete absence of fire safety protection. The prosecution follows a long investigative process by the Private Sector Housing team. Following inspection an Emergency Prohibition Order was served on the owner to prevent the tenants from living there. Suspecting the owner was ignoring the order a further visit was carried out on the 27 April 2012 and tenants were still found living at the premises. A case was therefore prepared for prosecution. Court papers were served on the owner on

16 November 2012 and Private Sector Housing Officers still found tenants living at the premises. The case highlights a growing and persistent problem in Darlington. It is believed that there is a strong link between providing substandard/unsafe accommodation for restaurant workers in return for low wages. This case is one of several over recent years and it is hoped that the fine of £3000 plus costs and subsequent publicity will serve as a warning to others.

## City Deal

5. In October 2012, the Government formally invited 20 “wave two” cities (including the Tees Valley sub-region) to submit their initial City Deal proposals by 15 January 2013. Each city, and their Local Enterprise Partnership, has been invited to put forward a proposal to address a significant local economic issue which requires a transformative response that is not currently possible through existing interventions.
6. Tees Valley Unlimited has been preparing drafts of an Expression of Interest (EOI) for discussion with partners including partner Councils, Business Representative Organisations and the sub-region’s lead contact from the Government’s Cabinet Office.
7. The emerging Expression of Interest for City Deal status will be based around the following content:
  - (a) The fundamental challenge for the area is that there are not enough jobs particularly private sector ones, with an over reliance on the public sector leading to high levels of unemployment.
  - (b) The area’s key sectors are important to UK economy, but involve high use/emission of CO2.
  - (c) There are significant strengths in exporting products, but also significant untapped potential.
  - (d) Opportunities for economic growth exist in the scale and make up of industrial activity.
  - (e) Opportunities exist to accelerate the pace of change through deploying green technology.
  - (f) The opportunity to grow the local economy and make it much more competitive by integrating activities and supply chains.
  - (g) The vision involves the nationally and internationally significant petro-chemical, bio-chemical and new renewable energy sectors to drive forward greater diversification and create opportunities in other sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, sub-sea, digital enablement.
  - (h) The area’s offer involves using the Investment Fund as a catalyst for private sector investment.

- (i) Local companies will lead on the integration of activities to enhance competitiveness.
  - (j) The Government is being asked for a single capital pot allocation, innovative funding mechanisms and a policy approach that is cross-departmental, cohesive and comprehensive.
  - (k) In addition, investment in commercialising research is sought to ensure that skill needs are met and that infrastructure provision keeps pace with the growth.
8. The EOI deadline for submissions was 15th January and the indications are that perhaps as few as 12 out of the 20 cities/areas invited to bid will be successful. Clearly the aim is to get through this competitive stage and then enter into much more detailed negotiations (8/9 months has been mentioned) with the Government to firm up the deal.

### **Environmental Health - Prosecution of Food Hygiene Offences**

9. Mr Hai Lin, the owner of New Sing Lee, a Chinese restaurant at 28 Eastbourne Road pleaded guilty at Darlington Magistrates Court in December to four food hygiene offences and was fined £3000 and also ordered to pay Darlington Borough Council costs of £350 and the £15 victim surcharge. The Food Hygiene Rating for the business is now 0 and the Council's Environmental Health Officers will continue to keep the situation under review.
10. The offences were found by an environmental health officer, who visited the premises to undertake a routine inspection on 31 May 2012 and found catering staff wearing outdoor clothing, dirty equipment, evidence of cross contamination between raw food and ready to eat foods, and no effective food safety management system.
11. Mr Ibrahim Nassar, the owner La Roma, a pizzeria at 191 Northgate, pleaded guilty at Darlington Magistrates Court in November to four food hygiene offences and was fined £1000 in relation to the first offence, no separate penalty for the others and was ordered to pay the Council's costs of £287 and the £15 victim surcharge.
12. The offences were found by environmental health officers on 12 July 2012 when they responded to a routine notification from Northumbrian Water that the water supply had been disconnected for non payment of a water charge. The officers found that premises were unclean and food was being still being prepared with a risk of contamination; without any running water to clean the equipment or work surfaces; food handlers were not wearing suitable work clothes; and they could not wash their hands. The manager of the restaurant voluntarily closed the business until the water was reconnected the following day.

### **Foundation for Jobs**

13. The Bishop of Durham, Justin Welby, visited Cummins and the Darlington campus of Teesside University on 11 January as part of a celebration event linked to the

first year anniversary of the launch of the campaign. His visit centred around Foundation for Jobs of which he is patron. At Cummins he undertook a tour of the plant and met apprentices and discussed the importance of encouraging engineering as a career option to young people. At the University, the Bishop gave a keynote speech to business leaders and headteachers, and thanked them for their support in delivering the campaign to date.

14. The campaign continues to gather momentum and real progress has been made towards achieving the first year's targets. 102 new apprenticeships have been created (against a target of 100); 105 internships have been delivered (against a target of 100); 959 young people (target 1,000) at Darlington schools and colleges have had meaningful contact with industry and 66 young people (target 50) have received support around developing entrepreneurial skills. Targets are currently being assessed for the start of the second year of activity commencing in April 2013.

### **Darlington Town Centre Retail Awards**

15. Growing year on year, despite difficult economic times, 2012 saw 155 entries and 45 finalists across 13 award categories. Almost 400 guests gathered to enjoy an awards ceremony and party disco finale at the Dolphin Centre. We are grateful for the ongoing support of its key sponsors: the Council; The Cornmill Centre; Distinct Darlington Ltd – the Town's new Business Improvement District Company and The Northern Echo. This year also saw the welcome attendance of Duncan Bannatyne, OBE, who presented the Fashion Retailer Award.
16. For 2012 there were also sponsors of individual awards including: Barclays Bank; Star Radio; Queen Street Shopping Centre; Pub Watch and Barker Proudlove.

### **BID – Update**

17. Distinct Darlington Ltd is the Business Improvement District (BID) for Darlington town centre and has been in operation since a successful vote by town centre businesses in April 2012. As a result of the projects outlined in the business plan, Distinct Darlington aim to encourage more visitors and shoppers into the town centre, increasing footfall for the businesses within the BID area and making Darlington a nicer place to spend time whilst also making the town centre a cleaner, safer and more welcoming environment for all.
18. This will be achieved through a series of projects such as marketing, promotional activity and town centre events. To date Distinct Darlington have undertaken a series of successful marketing activities to benefit Darlington town centre, namely an outdoor ice rink for the festive season. The ice rink has proved to be very successful with town centre businesses, visitors, shoppers and residents of Darlington with the rink often being at maximum capacity during weekends and school holidays. The increase in visitors to the town centre as a result of the ice rink has led to positive comments from businesses located throughout the town centre as they have noted an increase in footfall.

19. Distinct Darlington Ltd has also recently employed a team of four rangers under the 'Clean, Safe and Welcoming' project. The rangers are a highly visible team who work and interact with businesses and members of the public on a daily basis in order to ensure the town centre is a cleaner, safer and friendlier environment for all and that businesses are benefitting from the BID projects and schemes. They have also developed strong relationships with existing council departments including street cleansing teams, transport and traffic, and regularly liaise with the police in order to ensure the above is achieved as efficiently as possible.
20. Distinct Darlington has made significant progress in a relatively short space of time and has a series of projects organised for 2013 in order to further raise the profile of Darlington and encourage people to shop, eat and socialise in Darlington over competing town centres and retail parks.

### **Town Centre Walkabouts**

21. Town Centre walkabouts continue on a regular basis and particular problems are highlighted. Events during the festive period attracted extra visitors to the Town, including Christmas Wonderland Ice Rink, Christmas Lights Switch-on and Sunday's festive market. Unfortunately, due to bad weather, the Christingle market, scheduled for 20 December was cancelled.

### **Darlington Cares**

22. I am now a member of the Darlington Cares Board which has had two meetings since Council last met. Darlington Cares is a newly formed organisation which brings together the skills and expertise of businesses, local employers and their employees to make a positive difference in Darlington by channelling the efforts of volunteers to address the needs of local communities. Many of the companies in Darlington have a long standing record of supporting our communities. Darlington Cares presents an opportunity for to combine their efforts and encourage other companies to get involved with the potential of significantly increasing the impact. The Darlington Cares Board is developing its initial programme which includes supporting the renovation of a number of community buildings, providing support to school children with their literacy and working with local charities in developing their services. Through my involvement on the Board, I can ensure Darlington Cares is aware of areas of greatest need in Darlington.

### **Meetings**

23. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended several Business Engagement visits. It is my intention to visit as many businesses and retailers as possible to gain a better understanding of their operations and skills and workforce.
24. I continue to meet regularly with the Council's Business Engagement Team to assess youth unemployment and to look closely at trends and statistics, highlighting where particular problems may exist. For example, young males; how we (DBC) compare with other Tees Valley Authorities; specific age groups etc.

25. 'Lean' working remains at the forefront of priorities and I hold regular meetings with the Council's Transformation Team. A programme of Rapid Improvement Events continues to be delivered and a number of Business Improvement Projects designed to improve the efficiency of organisational processes (e.g. Procure to Pay, Corporate Landlord) are underway or nearing completion. We also continue to work with our partners to share learning and deliver efficiencies across multi agency processes.
26. The A66, Long Newton has given cause for concern during recent flooding. The Highways Agency is responsible for this road and whilst the junction is within the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees the flooding at this location causes significant impact on access to Darlington. I arranged to meet with Highways Agency to discuss options to help rectify the problem. Stockton Borough Council was also represented. At the meeting the Highways Agency acknowledged the concerns and recognised the impact on the transport links. It reaffirmed its commitment that it is undertaking urgent investigations to resolve this matter and are strengthening their contingency arrangements whilst this investigation takes place. Officers from both Stockton and Darlington continue to work with the Highways Agency to help resolve this problem.
27. The Railway Heritage Enquiry Group has met on five occasions in 2012 and will continue to find ways to make the most of Darlington's railway heritage. In the coming year the Group will be forming an appropriate business model to enable the funding of projects and initiatives. Presently the Group is working with the Council to ensure that railway heritage is integrated into the Local Plan and emerging strategies. The Group has already mapped and evaluated the existing heritage assets and is building good links with the rail industry, enthusiasts, railway modelling companies, the National Railway Museum and neighbouring authorities.
28. As a member of Task and Finish Group with the Association of North East Council's (ANEC), I met with colleagues on 9 January 2013 to discuss key issues for the North East and how Councils can stimulate economic growth. There was an opportunity to present what Darlington Council is doing and a presentation was given on the work for Central Park. There were several guest speakers at this meeting.

**Councillor Chris McEwan**  
**Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**