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**OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**

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

**Leisure and Team Local Motion Sixty Active Minutes Campaign**

2. Team Local Motion have launched the MEGA Motion campaign, which aims to encourage young people and their families to adopt active and sustainable travel habits as part of leading a healthy lifestyle and achieving '60 Active Minutes'. The campaign covers Darlington and South Durham and encourages families to adopt walking or cycling to school as part of their normal routine.
3. Leisure Services has adopted this campaign and mascot to reinforce the Sixty Active Minutes message with families in their leisure time. Pre-school and school aged children can access the MEGA Fun Activity Programme at the Dolphin Centre, Eastbourne Sports Complex and out in the community and SAM (Sixty Active Minutes mascot) lets families know that they have contributed to their sixty active minutes by attending the sessions.
4. The programme includes swimming, trampolining, gymnastics, soft play and more. Active awards are given out at some sessions to reward children for taking part. These may be certificates or stickers that are aimed at motivating children to take part again and keep them interested in continuing to be active. At some sessions children can also earn bonus energy awards; these are awarded for eating one of their '5 A Day', learning something new or being creative, all of which supply the right energy and education for children to aim for Sixty Active Minutes daily.

**Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH)**

5. The FISCH Programme is delivering to four schools this term - Northwood, Cockerton, West Park Academy and Corporation Road. The programme is currently in Week Four with good attendance figures at the after school clubs. Initial feedback from staff and pupils is very positive and children are engaging well in the programme.

**Darlington Triathlon Club Sport England Small Grants Bid**

6. Sports Development has supported a successful bid from Darlington Triathlon Club to Sport England's small grants fund. The £6,000 grant will increase participation through extending adult membership and create a junior section to the club by providing more opportunities and resources.

## **Sportivate – Triathlon Tasters**

7. Sports Development through the Sportivate programme has provided Triathlon Tasters to support Darlington Triathlon Club in its bid to create a junior section. There has been an overwhelming response, seeing 35 to 42 attendances per session. Due to demand a further block of Triathlon taster sessions are going to take place after half term. This has been supported by Polam Hall School and the Dolphin Centre allowing use of the onsite facilities.

## **Remembrance Parade – 11 November 2012**

8. There was a fantastic show of public support for Remembrance Sunday. The Events team planned and delivered the traffic management on the day ensuring road closures were in place, and also offered assistance around the cenotaph during the service.

## **Reindeer Parade – 25 November 2012**

9. The annual Reindeer Parade was held on 25 November 2012 funded by the Cornmill Shopping Centre and was heralded a huge success. Families braved the poor weather conditions to watch the parade go through the town centre before heading towards the Cornmill Shopping Centre. The Events team worked in partnership with the Cornmill to deliver the event and it was estimated between 4,000 to 5,000 lined the route to see Santa. Channel 5 filmed the parade for the 2013 Eddie Stobart series. Eddie Stobart transported the reindeers in a specialised vehicle.

## **Darlington Christmas Lights Switch On – 29 November 2012**

10. The Christmas Lights Switch On was held on 29 November 2012 in the Market Square. Several thousand people attended the event, which was held on the same evening as the opening of the Ice Rink. The Switch On was performed by Rhys Williams from Middlesbrough Football Club and Martin Gray, Manager of Darlington 1883 Football Club.
11. TFM Radio was media partners for the event and its presenters entertained the crowds, along with performances from Whinfield Primary School and other local performers. The event concluded with Santa's arrival in his sleigh and a spectacular short fireworks display provided by Alchemy Fireworks. St Cuthbert's Church kindly gave permission for the display to be fired from its churchyard.

## **Civic Theatre**

12. Ticket sales have been very good for the autumn season with Blood Brothers proving to be one of the most successful productions ever staged at the Civic Theatre. It was seen by over 6,300 people and took £161,000. Also well received and with good sales were Soul Sister and Haunting Julia.
13. The Civic Theatre has been presenting some shows in the Central Hall at the Dolphin Centre, following the closure of the Arts Centre. The play Blue Boy was

commissioned and developed by Civic Theatre with New Writing North and partner venues around the North East. The performance was sold out and there are plans to restage the play for the Edinburgh Fringe in 2013. Central Hall was also the venue for the Theatre's Royal Geographical Lecture Series and the first lecture, in November 2012, by Dr Alice Roberts, entitled Survivors of the Ice Age was also sold out.

14. As part of the Theatre's ongoing partnership with Theatre Hullabaloo, who are now based at the Friends' Meeting House, Skinnergate, technical support was provided for the TakeOff Festival of young people's theatre, which this year took place in Durham. Two productions from the festival were also presented in Darlington (Central Hall), including a young people's show from the Netherlands called Wanted: Rabbit. The Civic Theatre Director was invited to address delegates and VIPs at the launch event of the festival.
15. The Front of House team at the Civic Theatre received a special award in November 2012 from the Darlington and District Hospice Movement; the Excellent Supporter Award recognised their fundraising efforts on behalf of St Teresa's Hospice.

### **Tours, Talks and Special Events**

16. Approximately 430 people took part in the Council's tours, talks and special events this season. The Civic Theatre held an Open Morning on 20 October 2012 as part of the offer for Great Expectations, which involved a tour of the stage and set, arts workshops, and a talk from the cast and company. The Open Morning was attended by 75 people and was very well received. Participants expressed an interest in attending more similar events at the Civic Theatre.
17. A number of post and pre show talks were arranged this season, including a talk with acclaimed British Playwright John Godber for Bouncers, and a talk with Lucinda Dickens Hawksley, the Great-great-great Granddaughter of Charles Dickens. These talks are arranged to support engagement with the shows and to provide audiences with the chance to meet the cast/creative team, ask questions, and gain a greater insight into the creative and production process for the shows that are presented at the Civic Theatre. Post and pre show talks were arranged for Alf Ramsay Knew My Grandfather, Three Men in a Boat, Don Giovanni, Great Expectations, Blue Boy and Bouncers.
18. A number of tours of the Civic Theatre were also arranged for members of the public as well as a number of groups and organisations, including schools.

### **Workshops with Schools**

19. Philip Meeks' Pantomime Dame in Sleeping Beauty visited Redhall Primary School in November 2012 and delivered a workshop on how to become a Pantomime Dame, for 60 children. The workshop gave the young people the opportunity to see the magic behind the transformation process as Philip demonstrated putting on his make up and costume, with the chance to ask questions. The young people then went on to create their own Pantomime Dame Dress designs, which are displayed

in the Civic Theatre.

20. Hummersknott Academy had a visit from some of the stars of Blood Brothers, during a workshop within their school in November 2012. Young people had the chance to quiz the cast about their careers and how they got into theatre as well as taking part in a practical drama workshop.

### **ArtsSpark Youth Theatre and Dance**

21. ArtsSpark Youth Theatre and Dance Groups have been involved in a number of performances. Young people from the Breakdance, Intermix dance and Contemporary dance groups were invited to perform at a Youth Dance showcase event in Middlesbrough on 28 October 2012. They also performed a Christmas-themed theatre and dance performance in the town centre as part of the Christmas Market Spectaculars on 8 and 13 December 2012.

### **Creative Darlington**

22. A draft business plan for Creative Darlington was presented to the December 2012 Board Meeting and further work will be undertaken during 2013 to finalise the plan. Creative Darlington has also been signposting work on the following items.

### **The Bridge Visual Arts Centre**

23. The Darlington Cares Board has kindly agreed to support some interior and exterior decorative work at the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts in Darlington, which is likely to take place in mid April 2013. Work will support and develop The Bridge offer. New initiatives are being developed by artists based at The Bridge, demonstrating progress in making the venue artist led. These have included:

- (a) the formation of an exhibitions group who will programme the corridor gallery space.
- (b) a one-day pastels workshop event promoted by artist Deirdre McCrimmon at on 17 November 2012 (who hired space at the venue) that attracted 10 participants and required no subsidy.
- (c) the first Arts and Craft Fair was held on 24 November 2012 - with exhibitors charged for tables from which original arts/crafts were on sale.

24. Bookings for the Spring 2013 programme of adult art courses at The Bridge have opened. The Spring Course Programme opened week commencing 14 January 2013.

### **Crown Street Art Gallery**

25. The Gallery held the first solo exhibition by illustrator Stephen Waterhouse from October to November 2012. The exhibition received positive coverage in The Northern Echo. Waterhouse co-coordinated a gallery opening event and participatory workshops were led by Kate Gascoigne to coincide with the Big Draw

on 29 and 30 October 2012.

26. A 'Salon' show of works from the Borough Collection was held from November to December 2012. A new exhibition, The Book Borrowers, opened on 18 December 2012, featuring original work by Yvette Hawkins, Theresa Easton and Dawn Felicia Knox. The exhibition explores the connections between art and literature and responds to the gallery being based within a library. Darlington for Culture are supporting the exhibition by providing voluntary stewarding.

### **BBC YOUR PAINTINGS**

27. The BBC is promoting 'Your Paintings', uncovering the nation's art collection activity in February 2013. Creative Darlington has worked with the Council's Communications team in developing activity linked to the painting of Lewis Carroll at St Peter's Rectory, Croft, by Ralph Leslie Swinden. Activity will be held on 21 February 2013 in Crown Street Library.

### **Festival of Thrift**

28. Creative Darlington attended an event held at Lingfield Point on 21 November 2012 where John Orchard and Wayne Hemingway MBE introduced the concept of 'A Festival of Thrift' (a celebration of common sense living). Creative Darlington will liaise with Marchday Group Plc regarding the development of this concept. There is an aspiration to stage a Festival of Thrift in Darlington in 2013 focused on the Lingfield Point site, with opportunities to engage artists and organisations across Darlington.

### **Head of Steam**

29. The Museum has been successful in receiving accreditation with the Arts Council England and is now eligible for future external funding opportunities. This will include submission of a Heritage Lottery Fund bid worth £85,000 to commemorate the World War I 100 year anniversary in 2014. A further strategic bid to Arts Council England for Tees Valley-wide funding has been submitted in collaboration with the other four districts.
30. Museum Friends have financially supported the restoration and maintenance of four historic clocks within the museum. Furthermore the Friends have 80 per cent financially supported the upgrade to museum's MODES collection management database.

### **Markets**

31. The regular monthly Sunday People's Market continues to help to add to the Town Centre offer and showcasing quality independent traders continues.

### **Love Your Local Market**

32. This was one of Darlington's contributions to the Government's (Mary Portas) Initiative to help regenerate town centres through introducing market trading

opportunities for all. Economic Regeneration worked alongside the Markets team to deliver a very successful event. National interest culminated in a special presentation to the National Association of British Market Associates (NABMA) Conference and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) are promoting a repeat during May 2013. Darlington has again been asked to hold a Regional Roadshow in late February 2013.

### **Covered Market**

33. Further improvements have been made including a deep cleanse to the main hall area and introduction of art in the doorways produced by Darlington College. The Covered Market is now fully let with a new café scheduled to open January/February 2013 at 1-2 West Row, named 'The Waterhouse Kitchen'.

### **Refuse Collection**

34. Members will be aware of the revised arrangements for both refuse and recycling collection over the Christmas and New Year period. At the end of the period, no problems have been experienced with collections across the Borough and all waste placed out for collection (additional waste due to the festive period) has been collected and disposed of.

### **Winter Maintenance**

35. The mild conditions continue with winter maintenance operations being at a low level. The Council have used 1,325 tonnes of salt having treated the network on 55 occasions up to the end of December 2012 (33 occasions in December alone).

### **Emergency Call Out**

36. The wettest year since records began continues to cause problems for services. Both Street Scene teams and the Emergency Call Out team have responded to 69 requests for service in relation to flooding issues, these being primarily distribution of sand bags, road closures, erecting flood signage and servicing gullies.

### **Quest Assessment**

37. On 10 January the Sport and Physical Activity Development Team underwent its first ever Quest assessment. Quest defines industry standards and good practice. Our overall grading was 'Excellent' - the highest possible rating. For a small team, in these difficult financial times, and particularly for a first assessment, this result is indeed *excellent*. The assessor paid particular homage to the vibrancy and ethos of the whole team, including our large team of casual coaches, and commented that the output and impact of the team relative to its size was astounding. The assessor was particularly impressed with our partnership and local community work, and commented that some of our projects were "ground-breaking".

**Councillor Nick Wallis**  
**Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**