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## OVERVIEW OF TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO

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### Purpose of Report

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken under the Transport Portfolio.

### Civil Parking Enforcement

2. The Civil Parking Enforcement project is nearing implementation and we are awaiting the Department for Transport to agree a start date. Indications are this is likely to be late December/early January 2010. The review of Traffic Regulation Orders is complete with five new orders covering all off-street parking, on-street parking, moving traffic offences, resident parking and waiting and loading restrictions coming into effect in August 2010. A further legal process to convert the orders to comply with Civil Parking Enforcement powers will be carried out prior to the implementation date. The parking enforcement officers have received the requisite training and the new computerised ticketing software has been installed and is in the process of being tested. A communication strategy is in place to inform residents and businesses of the changes to parking enforcement within the Borough.

### Highway & Bridge Design Schemes

3. **Middleton-One-Row Retaining Wall Reinstatement** – The planning application for the scheme has been approved and the contract documents are currently being finalised.
4. **Polam Lane Footbridge** – The contract for the bridge refurbishment work has been awarded. The works will commence on site in late November/early December once works to divert public utilities equipment has been completed.
5. **Chesnut Street Bridge** – This bridge was identified as requiring a 7.5 ton weight restriction as the result of a recent structural inspection. A weight restriction order has been processed and appropriate regulatory and advisory signs are in place to advise drivers of the restriction. Further investigations are being carried out to consider the extent of the remedial works required to bring the bridge back up to full strength. This work will be developed in discussion with the Council's Conservation Officer and Government Office North East due to the listed status of the bridge.
6. **Woodland Road Cycle Lane Provision Study, Greenbank Road to Woodland Road Roundabout** – The initial findings of the feasibility study are currently being reviewed by officers.
7. **Whinfield Road/Whinbush Way Study** – A feasibility study into the provision of improved pedestrian and cyclist provision has now been completed. Part of this study was to consider the scope for improvements for general traffic at the signalised Whinfield

Way/Whinbush Way junction. An assessment is currently being undertaken into the affect of proposals on this junction. It is intended to consult the public on proposals when they are finalised.

### **Highway Maintenance Schemes**

#### 8. Recently Completed Schemes:

- (a) Auckland Avenue Phase 4 – footway refurbishment.
- (b) Whessoe Road Phase 3 – carriageway resurfacing.
- (c) Bushel Hill Drive – carriageway resurfacing.
- (d) Laburnum Road – verge hardening.
- (e) C182 Geneva Road Phase 4 (309 to 359 approximately) – carriageway resurfacing and verge hardening.
- (f) Priestgate – carriageway resurfacing.
- (g) Friars Pardon, Hurworth Phase 1 – footway renewal.

#### 9. Ongoing Schemes:

- (a) Victoria Road, Railway Station to St Cuthbert's Way – footway crossing point refurbishment.
- (b) Scotts Terrace: Back Lane Refurbishment (Scotts Terrace to Lawson Street)
- (c) Whinfield Road: Footway Refurbishment – (Salters Lane North Playing field to Whinbush Way)
- (d) A167 North Road Footway Phase 5 (Thompson Street Northwards East side) – footway refurbishment.

#### 10. Schemes Due to Commence -

- (a) Freemans Place – Carriageway resurfacing (Ring Road roundabout to pedestrian crossing north of Russell Street).

### **Winter/Adverse Weather Repairs**

#### 11. Permanent patching/resurfacing works:

- (a) Staindrop Road – ongoing
- (b) Nunnery Lane – due to commence
- (c) Winchester Way – Due to commence
- (d) Lakeside – Due to commence

## Traffic Management Schemes

12. **Green Lane Phase 2** – a new link has been constructed linking Green Lane to Sparrowhall Drive. The path will be used by cyclists and pedestrians and improves this important part of the town's circular route.
13. **Raised bus platforms** – A total of eight raised bus platforms have been constructed at Springfield Post Office, Firthmoor and Lascelles to assist people with mobility issues boarding buses.
14. **The Square, Middleton St George** – A scheme to redesign the existing junction to provide a roundabout is programmed to be complete later in the year. The scheme arose from a Talking Together consultation process with residents and local ward members. Residents have reported that there are significant road safety concerns with the current junction.
15. **Carmel Road Safer Route to School** – This scheme was partly constructed in the school half term to avoid conflict with students and was complete in early November. It has provided improved pedestrian and cyclist links within the school and was suggested by the pupils themselves as part of the School Travel Plan process.
16. **Gurney Pease footway improvements** - Improvements to the pedestrian links to this school are due for completion. This involved improving crossing points and resurfacing a well used rear lane.
17. **Safer Routes to School** Public consultation packs have been sent out to residents and ward councillors for the following schemes:-
  - (a) Longfield 20mph/school zone - two options, one with speed cushions, one without.
  - (b) Northwood Primary School 20mph zone.
  - (c) Reid Street 20mph zone.
  - (d) Heathfield 20 mph zone.
  - (e) Gurney Pease 20mph/school zone.
18. **Hummersknot School Safer Route to School** – A scheme to improve pedestrian cycleway links from Cemetery Lane and along Edinburgh Drive has recently been submitted for planning approval. Officers are also in discussion with local residents and ward Councillors regarding parking and traffic issues associated with the school.

## Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity Initiatives

19. A number of initiatives have been instigated, including the following:
  - (a) **Cyclist Activities** –
    - (i) Level two Bikeability training continued in nine schools in the new academic year. All schools have previously taken part in the training.

- (ii) As part of the celebration to mark the opening of the new bike sheds at Heighington Primary School, the Road Safety Officer, working in conjunction with the Borough's Bike It Officer, delivered resources for teaching staff and free comics or puzzle books and other items for the children during an intensive two days of cycling activities.

**(b) Pedestrian Training –**

- (i) Six schools took part in the pedestrian training in the first half of the term and work began in the second half term for another three schools. This academic year all schools have achieved 100% take up of the scheme thanks to the hard work and dedication of the pedestrian training supervisor.

**(c) School Activities –**

- (i) The Road Safety Officer visited Harrogate Hill Primary School to deliver the road safety scenario which the Year 6 children missed because they did not attend the safety carousel in June. In addition to the road safety quiz, as a bonus, the children were given a model seat belt demonstrator scenario to back up one of the questions.
- (ii) The general road safety leaflet 'Road Safety in Your Area' was distributed to all primary schools in the Borough at the end of September/beginning of October.
- (iii) The annual BE SAFE BE SEEN campaign took the form of 4,500 ghost capes for Key Stage 2 or 4,500 stickers, lollipops (supplied free courtesy of Taxaco) and Department for Transport posters for all Key Stage 1 children in the Borough's nursery and primary schools.
- (iv) The theatre in education production of Too much Punch for Judy achieved success in that for the first time in ten years all secondary schools participated in this powerful drama documentary about the consequences of drinking and driving.
- (v) Similarly, Pills Thrills and Automobiles toured Darlington for the sixth consecutive year. Darlington College hosted two sell out performances and had to turn away students for this voluntary activity in the students' curriculum. Carmel Technology College and Polam also took up the offer to show this drama documentary about the dangers of DRUG driving. The cast for this year was particularly outstanding and engaged the students in a most entertaining, thought provoking and educational manner.
- (vi) Work has started engaging Year 8 secondary students in the Ghost Street project. The DVD material includes the dangers faced by students in Darlington primarily as pedestrians but also as cyclists and passengers. The introduction is delivered by the Road Safety Officer who hopes follow up work will be continued in the school tutorials by teaching staff with the supplied back up teaching pack.

- (d) **Growing Older Living in Darlington (GOLD) Positive Health Day** – The GOLD organisation invited the Road Safety Team to provide driver vision screening and advice for older drivers with the approach of darker nights. Following the test, advice and free high visibility shopping bags were given to all participants as a thank you.

### **School Travel Plans**

20. All thirteen schools that applied for the Sustainable Travel Accredited and Recognised Scheme have had their applications approved. Eleven schools have achieved the Sustainable level, St George's CE Aided Primary has achieved Higher Standards and Cockerton CE VA Primary has achieved Outstanding. Cockerton will now be put forward for national school of the year at the Annual Modeshift Awards to be held in London in November.
21. Schools were awarded their accreditation plaques and certificates at our Darlington Schools Celebration event at Carmel RC Technology College on Wednesday 6 October. Councillor David Lyonette presented awards to the schools and gave a closing speech.
22. The annual hands-up travel to school survey took place on Wednesday, 22 September and the travel to school data for all local authority schools has now been inputted and analysed. Headline results show that:
- (a) Overall since 2004/05, car travel to all Darlington schools has reduced by 4.6% whilst cycling levels have increased 8-fold from 0.9% in 2004/05 to 7.5% in 2010/11.
  - (b) There has been an 8.8% reduction in overall car travel to primary schools since 2004/05 and cycling levels are 14 times higher in 2010/11 than in 2004/05.
  - (c) Car travel to secondary schools has increased by 4.1 percentage points between 2004/05 and 2010/11. Over the same period bus travel to secondary schools has reduced by 8.2 percentage points (which represents a 25.5% reduction). Meanwhile, cycling levels have quadrupled and over the last academic year there has been a 2.8% increase in walking levels at secondary schools.

### **Cycling**

23. Durham Police are working with Darlington Borough Council to promote cycle security following an increase in the theft of cycles, particularly high value bikes. Schools were invited to take part in a competition to design a poster to highlight the problem and promote the use of cycle locks when the bikes are left unattended. Copies of the winning poster will be put up in all the school cycle parking shelters and the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) will put them up in other locations to spread the message. The winner from St Aidan's Academy was presented with a bike, funded by Sustrans, by Assistant Chief Constable Michael Banks.

24. In addition roadshow events were held during the half term holiday at three locations - market stall in the town centre, Morrisons in North Road and Morrisons at Morton Park. 200 bike marking kits were supplied, funded by the Police and by Cycling England, which provide a unique identification number to each bike, recorded on a national database, so that any stolen bikes can be returned to their owners. The Police were also able to provide information on safe cycling including using reflectors and lights to ensure that cyclists can be seen during the darker mornings and evenings.
25. A contract has been let to provide smart card operated secure cycle parking at Bank Top Station. Work will start around November/December this year. The work is being funded from the Second Local Transport Plan and the Boosting Advanced Passenger Transport Systems (BAPTS) Interreg project.
26. The Highways Agency has confirmed that it will start on site in late November on the construction of the footway/cycleway alongside the A66 Sadberge to the outskirts of the urban area. It will link into the existing route which runs from Little Burdon roundabout west toward Great Burdon and Haughton and south to the bridleway bridge over the A66 (linking to Middleton St George and into the town centre via the route alongside the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor).

### **Community Rail Partnership**

27. The Community Rail Partnership Officer is working with a website developer to develop a brand image and website for the Bishop Line. This will be used as a marketing tool to promote the rail line as a quick and easy way to travel to Darlington from South Durham with information on timetables and fares, and in addition will provide links to the Head of Steam Rail Museum and other attractions to promote local rail heritage.

### **North East Active Travel (NEAT)**

28. NEAT held its first regional conference on the 17 November in Newcastle. NEAT is a unique partnership of health and transport agencies. It was established to address transport challenges on behalf of the Economy Culture and Environment Regional Advisory Group, which advises the Regional Director of Public Health on the delivery of the Better Health Fairer Health strategy. NEAT's aim is to make the North East of England the most physically active region within a generation, with the majority of short urban journeys (under five miles) being made on foot or bike. Chaired by Professor Stephen Singleton, Director of Public Health for the North East, the conference included discussions on what changes are required to the physical environment to make it easier to travel by bike or on foot and what measures could be used to change the public's mindset and significantly increase active travel to school.

### **Tees Valley Bus Network Initiative (TVBNI)**

29. The Cabinet agreed this month to support the Tees Valley Bus Network. This will potentially invest over £9 million in the Borough focused on reversing the trends in bus patronage. This will be achieved through a combination of highway improvement schemes that will improve the reliability of the network for buses and other road users; improving the experiences of using the bus through informed waiting facilities, buses and travel information.

### **Third Local Transport Plan (LTP)**

30. Cabinet also agreed in November to proceed with the final stage of public engagement on the high level strategy options to deliver the communities long term aspirations in relation to transport. The Government announced its broad spending plans on 20 October and the details of those budgets are currently being worked through to inform Members about options for delivery. It is anticipated that Cabinet will consider in February 2011 the detailed implementation plan for the Third LTP and the TVBNI project.

### **Plugged in Places**

31. The Council has also signed up to the Plugged in Places initiative being promoted throughout the North East. This project will ensure that there are 'refuelling' places throughout the North East for electric vehicles and supports the economic ambition to develop and promote electric vehicles and associated jobs in the region.

**Councillor David Lyonette  
Transport Portfolio**