
OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Economy and Regeneration Portfolio :-
 - (a) **Enterprise Zones** – We have endorsed Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership’s Enterprise Zone proposal and agreed Darlington’s proposal for Central Park to be considered as an Enterprise Zone. Initial indications are that the Government have warmly welcomed the proposals. Officers and I are now working to maximise the digital business opportunities this presents.
 - (b) **Use of Supplementary Planning Documents for Development Management Purposes** – We have recommended to Council that the Council’s existing supplementary planning policy documents as specified be used for development management purposes, until such time as more up to date Local Development Framework documents are adopted to replace them, or they become obsolete. This will support the effective implementation of the policies of the development plan for Darlington and maintain a comprehensive planning policy framework during the preparation of development plan documents to support the adopted Core Strategy.

Albert Hill Skip Hire, Dodsworth Street

2. Co-ordinated efforts by a number of agencies to control activities at the Albert Hill Skip Hire premises in Dodsworth Street resulted in a multi-agency unannounced visit being made to the site in the last week of June. The purpose was to collect information that will be valuable in developing appropriate enforcement actions in response to the ongoing and long-standing complaints about the manner in which the site is operated. The visit was supported by the police and included representatives from Development Management, Environmental Health, the Environment Agency, VOSA, and the Health and Safety Executive. These agencies are now putting in place a plan of action to ensure that regulations and standards are met at the site.

Enterprise Coaching / Business Start-Up Coach

3. Agreement has been reached with TEDCO, the development agency covering South Tyneside and Northumberland, who provide a Business Start-Up Coach (at their cost) 2 days per week, to extend their service to October 2011. Together with the Business Enterprise Coach there have been a total of 221 individuals supported in developing self-employment between September 2010 and June 2011.

The Tees Valley In-Work Support Project (TVIWSP)

4. This project broadens awareness of the benefits of health and well-being within the workplace, and assists employers with staff retention when addressing any health, and other, issues should they arise.
5. This Project was previously fully funded through Single Programme monies and was scheduled to end on 31 March 2011. Additional monies have been secured through an underspend from the South Tees Fit for Work programme extending the project to 31st December 2011.

Tees Valley Retail Skills Shop – Darlington & Redcar

6. The Retail Skills Shop run by Jigsaw Training on behalf of National Skills Academy is now offering training and support to the retail businesses and its workforce. The products offered include full Retail Apprenticeships, VRQs in Customer Service, Selling Skills, Conflict Handling, Retail Skills, Visual Displays etc. They also offer speciality training such as Mary Portas' Master Classes and also World Host Training which offers customer service excellence in line with that offered for the Olympics 2012. The Skills Shop will be based in Binns, House of Fraser on High Row.

'More'

7. Gravitas Marketing have now taken over the discount membership scheme from the Council. The 'Get More From Darlington' scheme is a great example of the new business model where the private sector, in this case, has taken on the scheme as a commercial business. The scheme follows on from the success of the previous dine and unique schemes.

The Work Programme

8. As part of its drive to Get Britain Working, Jobcentre Plus is replacing existing employment schemes, pilots and projects with one new Work Programme - the centrepiece of the Government's plans to reform welfare-to-work provision in the UK.
9. In Darlington, from 20th June, the Work Programme will be delivered by Avanta and Triage. Avanta already have an established Darlington base at Northgate House and Triage are taking new premises at Enterprise House, Valley Street North.
10. Officers are working with Jobcentre Plus looking for more help from business, public and voluntary sectors, and local deliverers of services, to develop and expand the recently launched: 'Work Clubs' - where people who are out of work can exchange skills and share experiences, 'Work Together' – encouraging volunteering as a way of building up experience and skills to improve job chances and 'Work Experience' targeted at 18-21 year old Job Seekers Allowance customers who find lack of experience a barrier to finding work and can last from 2-8 weeks.

Business Engagement Strategy Refresh

11. I have asked officers to refresh the Business Engagement Strategy, which is now three years old. The Prosperous Theme Group at its last meeting considered the emerging TVU Business Engagement Strategy, the Council's role, the Partnerships role and Business to Business opportunities. This work should conclude by September.

Regional Growth Fund Round 2

12. The Council has worked with local business and TVU to make a submission to the Regional Growth Fund 2. The submission was made on the 1st July and it is anticipated that a Government announcement will be made in September.

Councillor Chris McEwan
Economy and Regeneration Portfolio