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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:

**Cockerton Regeneration 2012-2014 Procurement of Developer Partners**

2. We have agreed for officers to enter into negotiations direct with Dunelm and Endeavour Housing Association as special purchasers in relation to the demolitions and re-provision of housing on the Cockerton Estate. The Director of Resources will report back to us once negotiations are completed with recommendations for a Development Agreement and appropriate safeguards to protect the Council's interests and minimise its risks. Should negotiations break down, we have given authorisation for officers to procure developer partners through a tender process using the Homes and Communities Framework agreement or a Council procurement. We have also agreed that the demolition and clearance works be undertaken through Design and Building Services in order to comply with Department of Communities and Local Government conditions as part of the Council House Finance reforms.

**Warm Up North – Memorandum of Understanding**

3. We have approved the formal signing of the Warm Up North Memorandum of Understanding with regional local authority partners and the release of £5m of prudential borrowing to fund energy efficiency improvements in residential homes and other public buildings in Darlington commencing in 2013-14 for a period of three years. The Warm Up North programme (previously called the Newcastle retrofit programme) is the agreed branding name for the regional partnership which is proposing to deliver energy efficiency measures to residential and other public buildings through the Green Deal from 2013. The regional partnership is led by the City of Newcastle Council but also includes Darlington, Durham, South Tyneside and Northumberland authorities.

**Growing Places Fund**

4. In November 2011 the Government announced the creation of the Growing Places Fund (GPF), a £500m national pot of money to which Local Enterprise Partnerships could apply to part-fund the delivery of key infrastructure projects. Tees Valley Unlimited has co-ordinated Tees Valley's bid to the fund and Darlington submitted one project, split into two components for Central Park. Tees Valley Unlimited has confirmed that Darlington has been included in the shortlist of projects for £1.2m for Phase 1 infrastructure on Central Park. Cabinet has also approved the six shortlisted projects recommended for further consideration and for Stockton Borough Council to undertake the role of accountable body for the Growing Places fund.

## **Businesses vote ‘YES’ for Darlington Town Centre BID**

5. Darlington Town Centre businesses voted ‘YES’ in the ballot to decide on setting up a Business Improvement District (BID).
6. Results announced last month showed the majority of businesses backed the BID to drive investment in the Town Centre and give local businesses a greater say in the way it is marketed, maintained and managed.
7. The vote gives the go-ahead for ‘Distinct Darlington’ to set up the BID and to work with partners in taking forward the Business Plan, which will deliver over £1.5 million of investment in the area over the next five years. The BID will officially launch in July of this year.
8. The focus of the BID Interim Board is now on putting all the arrangements in place for the start of the BID and on delivering the Business Plan.

Detailed figures for the vote were as follows :

Total number of votes cast – 210

Total number of votes in favour - 113 (54%)

Aggregate rateable value of businesses voting - £8,097,000

Aggregate rateable value of businesses voting in favour - £4,952,650 (61%)

Therefore, a majority was achieved by both aggregate rateable value and numbers voting.

## **Foundation for Jobs**

9. An update on progress towards meeting the stated targets for the campaign (figures at 22 March).
  - (a) **Apprenticeships** (target for the year – 100 more apprenticeship places) since the launch there have been 19 additional apprenticeship places offered;
  - (b) **Internships** (target for the year – 100 internship places). There have been 15 internship places created since January;
  - (c) **Business/School links** (target for the year – 1,000 school pupils in formal links with employers including “cadet” schemes). 90 year nine pupils from across Darlington took part in an Olympic-themed business challenge in February. The event’s key aim was to develop their employability and entrepreneurial skills and to encourage them to think about careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM);
  - (d) **Self-Employment** (target for the year – 50 young people developing self-employment skills). In February, 30 young people from Longfield Academy took part in a self-employment workshop. Further workshops are planned for The Education Village and Hummersknott Academy.

10. A further meeting was held on 27 March in respect of developing the project. In addition to the headline targets above, other initiatives that are being considered include:-
  - (a) Securing input from business leaders to Options Evenings in schools;
  - (b) Developing linkages with NEPIC to access to a scheme they run that provides industry awareness and trains teachers in leading STEM subjects;
  - (c) Examining potential barriers experienced by smaller SMEs to employing apprentices;
  - (d) Pursuing the offer of the delivery of communication skills training through Everything Everywhere;
  - (e) Developing a pool of volunteer business people to support schools and colleges in conducting interview training.
  
11. Owen McAteer, formerly the Business Editor of the Northern Echo, started his secondment in the role of Foundation for Jobs Coordinator, for an initial 12-month period on 2 April and is currently establishing himself in the role – effecting introductions and developing specific activities.

### **Trading Standards: Age Restricted Products**

12. Trading Standards held a training event on 25 January 2012 for retailers selling age restricted products. This enabled 28 people attending to complete ‘The Fair Trading Award on Age Restricted Products’ run by the Trading Standards Institute. This training helps businesses and their staff, understand their legal responsibilities when selling age restricted products and gives practical help on how they can comply.
  
13. Following this training, Trading Standards undertook an alcohol test purchasing operation using an underage volunteer. All of the retail premises tested did not sell alcohol to the underage volunteer and have been informed of their successful sales procedures.

### **Environmental Health: Food Hygiene Rating Scheme**

14. Darlington Borough Council is now operating as part of the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. All premises in the Borough supplying food directly to the consumer are rated and the ratings publicised through the national scheme. The Council received funding from the Food Standards Agency to pay for the additional work needed to implement the scheme.
  
15. An analysis of our 961 food premises shows that 722 businesses are within the scope of the FHRS scheme and over 80 per cent received a rating of very good. The hygiene ratings are calculated by the Council’s appointed food safety officers when they carry out programmed food hygiene inspections.
  
16. Information about all businesses rated under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is available on the Food Standards Agency website at [www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings).

### **Albert Hill – Appeal**

17. Earlier this year the Environment Agency served a notice revoking the Environmental Permit allowing the site to operate as a waste transfer station. This effectively stopped waste being brought on to the site. The company has appealed against the notice. The appeal will be heard by the Planning Inspectorate at a date yet to be set. Ward Members

from Central, Haughton East and Haughton West have submitted a written presentation to the Planning Inspectorate supporting the Environment Agency's actions.

### **Flood and Water Management Act 2010**

18. This Act has introduced new duties, powers and responsibilities that the Council must deliver. Work is underway with Stockton Borough Council to develop efficient and cost effective arrangements for delivery through a joint approach. The new functions include regulating some works impacting on ordinary water courses that require consents, building and maintaining registers of features and assets on ordinary water courses and investigating flooding incidents. Duties still to be implemented through the Act include managing applications for, and adopting, sustainable urban drainage systems.

### **Bank Top Station**

19. Cabinet was advised on 1 May 2012 of proposals to reconfigure the rail network / track layout within and adjacent to Bank Top Station as part of a wider scheme to increase the frequency and decrease the journey time of trains to and from London. The report also sought agreement for the Council to work with partners to deliver a whole industry and regeneration solution for Bank Top Station in order to make Bank Top Station and the surrounding area an anchor for the regeneration of southern part of the Town Centre Fringe area.

### **Central Park – Refreshed Scheme and Consequential Changes to the Development Agreement**

20. A report regarding Central Park was submitted to Cabinet on 1 May 2012 to seek Members' endorsement of the refreshed masterplan for Central Park, other changes to the scheme, including the consequential changes required to vary the Development Agreement and Joint Venture, and to seek delegated powers for the Director of Place and the Director of Resources to negotiate the terms and conditions of and for the completion of the Deed of Variation and Joint Venture.

### **Darlington Local Planning Policy Framework**

21. Agreement was sought from Cabinet on 1 May 2012 that a recommendation be made to this Council meeting that planning policy contained in national planning policy statements and guidance notes (PPSs and PPGs) continue to be used as good practice. This would support making decisions on planning applications, where the statutory development plan and the Government's new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are silent or provide insufficient detail, on the planning matter at issue.

### **Digital City**

22. The Council is looking to invest £40,000 of Local Area Agreement Reward Grant into DigitalCity Business (DCB) in return for a 3 year Service Level Agreement to provide support to Darlington's Digital businesses and help Darlington implement any actions arising from the Economic Strategy and support the Central Park Digital Enterprise Zone. DCB was formed in 2005 as part of the wider DigitalCity initiative, aimed at creating a successful and self-sustaining digital and creative 'supercluster' in the Tees Valley. DCB

represents the business end of a coordinated pipeline of support to progress graduates from Teesside University's DigitalCity Innovation (DCI) institute and other potential digital entrepreneurs, and steer them through the early stages of business growth, accelerate their progress and maximise their economic potential. The Council is one of a range of partners including the other 4 Tees Valley Local Authorities and Teesside University who will provide finance to DCB as they further develop their services for the benefit of Tees Valley. The project is part-funded by European Regional Development Funding (ERDF).

### **Gypsy and Traveller Consultation**

23. Through the local planning process, the Council needs to identify and allocate sites to meet the future needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople. As such, between 23 March and 24 April a consultation exercise was carried out to get views on the suitability of seven potential sites. The programme of Council events/drop-in sessions, various separate meetings organised by local groups, and other channels of communication, generated a high level of response, the details of which will now be analysed. The process is at the early options stage, and the sites included carried no endorsement from the Council. We are likely to bring this to a resolution as soon as possible.
24. Since the last meeting of Council, I have met with businesses and attended the following meetings :-
  - (a) Attended the Railway Heritage Event held on the 20<sup>th</sup> April at the Head of Steam Museum. A summit was held with various interested parties to find a way to work together to make the most of Darlington's important and rich railway heritage.
  - (b) Presented certificates to 25 retailers who had undergone training on selling age restricted products. The training which was very successful was externally accredited by the Trading Standards Institute, under the Fair Trading Award.

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