
OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

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

Refuse Collection

2. Members have given consideration to the collection arrangements for residual household waste and the introduction of a wheeled bin service and have agreed to introduce a wheeled bin service across the Borough with an allocation of £314,000 per annum made within the Medium Term Financial Plan and a one-off allocation of £60,000 be included within the MTFP for this financial year 2012/13.
3. This Council is one of only 9 per cent of waste collection authorities across the UK that operate a dedicated black sack collection system and a number of the remaining authorities are converting to a wheeled bin service. There are a number of benefits to a wheeled bin service including significant health and safety benefits, particularly around manual handling and to cut/needle stick injuries, which the Council needs to consider when analysing all the evidence available and any financial implications. There would be substantial involvement of all Members, and of specific groups likely to be affected, in the run-up to the implementation of wheeled bins, to ensure that the transition takes advantage of Members' knowledge of their wards and is as smooth as possible. I welcome Place Scrutiny's plans to learn from best practice in other areas as part of this preparation.

Darlington School Games

4. The Darlington School Games is a year round programme of inter-school sporting competitions, events and festivals which lead into county level (Tees Valley) competitions. There is a huge variety of sports and activities on offer for all schools to take part in at all age ranges and ability levels. The School Games is the Government's flagship strategy to promote more young people taking part in competitive activities.

Dance Festival

5. The School Games Dance Festival took place in early February at the Arts Centre. There were 30 performances from primary and secondary schools and post-16 educational establishments across the Borough, involving approximately 500 young people in a hugely successful celebration of dance around the theme of the Cultural Olympiad. Some of the performances will be performed at events and festivals throughout the year leading up to the 2012 Olympic Games in the summer.

Tees Valley Cross Country

6. A team of 48 children (Years 3 to 6) from 16 schools across the Borough were selected from our town event in November to represent Darlington in the inter-partnership cross-country championships held at Prissick Base, Middlesbrough on 1 March 2012. This year we organised and delivered regular training sessions through January and February to enable the children to meet and get to know each other, and to improve their endurance, speed and self-confidence. Darlington won the competition overall and won three of the six races, coming third in the other three.

High Five Netball Tournament

7. Fifteen primary schools, approximately 150 children, took part in the High Five Netball Tournament at held at Longfield Academy on 21 March 2012. This fantastic afternoon of netball competition was enabled with the support of some superb umpiring from young leaders and players from the local DJs club who currently attend Longfield Academy. The final saw Polam Hall beat Gurney Pease with Heighington and Whinfield in third and fourth places respectively.

Primary Swimming Galas

8. Over the course of the two evenings of 15 and 22 March 2012, Primary Schools Swimming Galas allowed around 400 young competitors to represent their schools in some hard contested competition. 24 schools took part and the overall winners of the small schools were St Augustine's, with Abbey gaining the large schools honours.

GEM

9. In addition to the eight GEM classes running currently, four in partnership with Age UK and its 'Fit as a Fiddle' scheme, the Sports Development Team have now organised a six-week trial at the Dolphin Centre, which started on 21 March 2012 with a good response rate. A GEM leader course also started on 29 March 2012 to train several new leaders to deliver GEM in the Lifeline services and the community.

Eastbourne Development (Activities for Disability Groups)

10. An after school disability football session has been set up at Eastbourne Sports Complex on a Tuesday Evening which runs immediately before the Adult Disability Group. The Education Village is currently transporting up to 15 young people to the Complex for the session, which has also been advertised and opened up to young people, aged 11 to 16, in the area. We have now funded the coaches to complete all of the relevant qualifications required to ensure the sessions are provided at a high standard.

Nordic Walking

11. The Nordic Walking project has run successfully over the last year. There have been many taster sessions at various events and organisations, which has promoted awareness of the sessions delivered by Darlington Sports Development. Sessions have also been promoted through the Local Motion (Sustainable Travel Team) with the Individualised Travel Marketing Team (ITM). Press release has worked effectively leading to 30

enquiries on the most recent promotion.

12. The current programme offers four weekly walks taking place on Tuesday mornings (in association with Age UK), Thursday evenings, Friday mornings and Saturday mornings.
13. The Nordic walking scheme has engaged 81 participants over the last year seeing a total throughput of 608 participants at sessions. Retention of walkers is good and sessions are sustainable with a cost of £2.50 per participant per session. There is a higher proportion of females taking place in Nordic walking at 83.9 per cent compared to males at 16 per cent.

Cycle in Darlington

14. The Cycle: In Darlington programme has been launched in partnership with Local Motion, which is partly funded by the Department for Transport. The project has started with weekly rides leaving from Eastbourne Sports Complex. The Cycle: In Darlington programme has been promoted by the Council's communications channels including social media and within the 'Pedal Power' brochure.
15. Cycle: In Darlington offers rides lasting between one to two hours to help people build their fitness. Trained staff lead the groups within the local area and help build their confidence, fitness and bike handling skills. Additional rides can and have been set up with community organisations, education centres and businesses. Most recently a number of rides have been led for Darlington College and their pupils with good feedback from staff and tutors.
16. The Cycle: In Programme once established will aim to target community and social groups such as family rides, women's only and rides 50+ rides. Sports Development are currently establishing a Cycling Forum to look at delivery of cycling throughout Darlington to ensure effective partnership working takes place.

Skate Klub

17. The new skate klub has started at Carmel RC College on a Tuesday evening costing £2.50 per person. The Sports Development Team have been working in partnership with Dan Callow who is an ex pro skateboarder who has recently qualified to deliver the sessions. A Sportivate bid has been accepted to help expand the sessions to purchase more equipment and work towards qualifying more leaders, and currently 30 young people are attending the session.

Sportivate

18. Sportivate is a Lottery programme that gives 14 to 25 year olds access to six-week courses in a range of sports including judo, golf, tennis, wakeboarding, athletics, and parkour or free running. The Darlington Sports Development team secured £7,000 of funding to deliver the programme locally.
19. The programme is aimed at those who are not currently choosing to take part in sport in their own time, or are doing so for a very limited amount of time, and will support them to continue playing sport in their community after the six weeks period. Activities have

already been delivered in Darlington at local clubs and community based venues, these have included Orienteering, Zumba, Volleyball, Swimming, Hockey, Boys Dance, Squash and Basketball. Currently Darlington has retained 140 young people aged 14 to 25 and have nearly reached the Year 1 target of retaining 175 of the participants for the six- week programme of activity.

20. The Sports Development Team has been successful in gaining £5,000 for delivering new community based activity in Year 2. The bids include skate klub, street swords, squash, zumba, boxercise, cycling, dance, badminton, cricket and table tennis.

Inspired Facilities

21. The Sports Development Team has been working alongside Darlington Indoor Bowls Club submitting an inspired facilities bid for a new bowls carpet at the Club. The bid was submitted on 27 March 2012. Various partners have contributed to the bid including: Tees Valley Sport, English Indoor Bowling Association, Durham County Bowls Association, Sport England, School Games Organiser and other disability groups including Darlington MIND. The bid will aim to:
 - (a) Improve the playing facilities and the bowls experience for members of the Club.
 - (b) Increase participation of people playing at the Bowls Club, an increase of between 2 to 5 per cent.
 - (c) Continuation of consultation with new and existing members.
 - (d) Improvement of partnership working with Darlington Sports Development Team and local businesses to maximise potential marketing opportunities.
 - (e) Extended participation in organised competitive activity at a variety of competitive levels.
 - (f) Effectively market the Bowls Club, the facility and the sport of Bowls.
 - (g) Promote the facility to the local community who are seeking to maintain and improve health through physical activity and exercise.
 - (h) Develop the current coaching workforce within Darlington Bowls Club.
 - (i) Submit a clubmark application to County Durham Sport.

Best of Darlington Awards

22. The seventh annual Best of Darlington Awards was held at Darlington College on 23 March 2012. The event which was attended by almost 300 people and received a record number of entries, showcased the best of Darlington, all of whose stories amazed those present.
23. There were eleven categories which included Contribution to Sport, Contribution to the Arts and Contribution to the Community, and the Chairman's Award which was

awarded to Aimee Yule for her bravery in splitting up a fight in the Town Centre, and Lance Corporal Steven Hughes for his bravery in Afghanistan.

24. The two people who had made the most significant contribution were awarded the Citizen of the Year and the Young Citizen of the Year awards. The Citizen of the Year was awarded to Roderick Francis, who has dedicated many years volunteering at Firthmoor Community Centre.
25. The Young Citizen of the Year was awarded to Peter Richardson, who after losing his job at Groundwork North East continued to volunteer for the organisation and used this opportunity to develop his skills further whilst helping others.

Sport Relief Mile – South Park

26. Darlington hosted the third Sport Relief Mile on 25 March 2012 in South Park. Attracting 600 participants raising money for Comic Relief, families with young children and grandparents ran round a scenic mile circuit to complete their chosen distance of either one, three or six miles.
27. Entertainment, which included a steel band, street theatre and children's entertainment, was provided throughout the day to entertain spectators and participants.

Civic Theatre and Arts Centre

28. The Spring Season at the Civic Theatre has been well received with audiences and reviewers particularly acclaiming On Golden Pond, Swallows and Amazons and Bette and Joan. Young people from the Rachel Coad School of Dance participated in The Twist, a show celebrating the music of the 1950s and 1960s.
29. The new What's On brochure for the Summer season has been launched and includes some exciting new shows for the Civic Theatre, including the English Touring Theatre and Shakespeare's Globe prestigious production of Anne Boleyn, comedy dramas Yes Prime Minister and Dry Rot and a first ever visit by singer song writer Joan Armatrading. In July, the Civic Theatre will be presenting a special production of Alf Ramsey Knew My Grandfather. All profits of this production will go to the Darlington FC Youth Team to help to sustain the success of the football club through the development of its young players. At the Arts Centre, a strong line up of shows includes a new drama, Napoli by Flying Cloud Theatre Company, founded by Leandra Ashton, who grew up in Darlington and attended Carmel College. This show premieres at the West Yorkshire Playhouse before touring nationally and is accompanied by an innovative outreach programme.

Darlington Arts Centre

Arts Award

30. The seven Bronze Award students and the Silver Award student who successfully achieved their awards recently, appeared in the Northern Echo with their certificates celebrating their success. The team are continuing to work with students at Bronze, Silver and Gold Levels and we are supporting a group of Year 6 gifted and talented

students at Mount Pleasant School in achieving their Bronze, as well as a student who is now pursuing the Gold Award. We have three Bronze moderations taking place next week.

Arts Education Workshops

31. A hugely successful Page to Stage workshop was organised with Swallows and Amazons at the Civic Theatre with 154 students attending from schools across the region. All attendants provided positive feedback.
32. We have recently worked with Flying Cloud Theatre Company to deliver a theatre workshop for Ferryhill Business and Enterprise College Drama students, we also delivered a full day of workshops for Key Stage 1 at Harrowgate Hill Primary School on Mexican Arts.

ArtsSpark

33. Darlington Arts Centre provided a number of workshops over the February half term for children and young people, led by professional artists from across the region.
34. ArtsSpark's Contemporary Dance Group performed at PULSE in February, a regional dance platform for dance groups from across the region.

Visual Art

Myles Meehan Gallery

35. The Myles Meehan Gallery is currently hosting Joseph Hillier's *It's Not True, But It Might Be Beautiful*. Joseph employs diverse means to make his sculpture for various sites, many of which are public places (such as 'In Our Image', in Newton Aycliffe). However this new body of work has been made specifically for Myles Meehan and is on a more intimate scale. The exhibition has so far been receiving excellent feedback and has generated some sales.
36. Artist Joseph Hillier delivered an artist talk to members of the public in the Myles Meehan Gallery on 3 February 2012. The talk was very well attended and received very positive feedback from audience members

Lounge Gallery

37. *In ob27's World* by Olivier Blanc is on show in the Lounge Gallery until 31 March 2012. Olivier Blanc is a French Creative Designer and Commercial Illustrator who is based in England. For an international clientele he creates designs and illustrations for the marketing, advertising, greeting cards and fashion markets.

Openart Studio

38. As a result of a successful partnership working between Darlington Borough Council and Primary Care Trust County Durham, Openart Studio continues to increase in popularity.

39. Primary providers such as Darlington GPs, Secondary providers of Community Psychiatric Nurses, Occupational Therapists and third sector professionals (DAD Carers, St Theresa's Hospice, JobCentre+ to name just a few) are regularly referring patients and clients to this project.
40. Over 250 people have been referred to OAS with currently a total of 4,378 attendances for the daytime, twilight, after schools and outreach programme
41. The funding from PCT was contracted to provide 6 hours per week; due to the partnership working with Darlington Borough Council, Openart Studio has provided a minimum of 17.5 hours service provision per week throughout the year and within PCT budget allocation.
42. Following the success of the project in 2011-12 funding of £64,000 has been secured for its continuation in 2012-13. New venues are being investigated to accommodate the project for the future.

Arts Premises : Future Options

43. The Council has learnt that an initial bid for £3 million to the Arts Council to create a purpose-built arts hub next to the Dolphin Centre, Darlington, has not been successful. The Arts Council have, however, reaffirmed their commitment to working with the Council in developing a potential new bid for the next round of Arts Council funding as well as exploring proposals which are currently being considered following the marketing of the current Arts Centre site, Vane Terrace, Darlington. Whilst we are disappointed to learn this funding bid will not be taken forward for further consideration; we are very much heartened by the support of the Arts Council and their commitment to continue to work with us on a range of new projects including a potential new bid. Alison Clark-Jenkins, Regional Director at the Arts Council, said: "The funding bid from Darlington Borough Council was very well-received in an extremely competitive bidding round. Whilst it is regretful we were not able to award the funding on this occasion, we look forward to continuing our work with the Council to further develop provision for the arts in Darlington."
44. The Council has marketed the Arts Centre site for sale and received bids to buy the building. In addition to proposals to buy the site, we have also received a proposal that involves extensive refurbishment of the Arts Centre building on Vane Terrace for a range of uses, including the provision of new commercial premises for creative industries. This proposal is in very early stages of development and as it relies on private funding, there remains a significant degree of fluidity at this time. The proposal also explores the provision of gallery and performance spaces, together with hotel and restaurant facilities. This proposal, Project Vane, if it proves to be a viable proposition, offers the possibility to significantly raise the profile of the arts in Darlington and of Darlington in the arts, as well as being a substantial contributor to economic development and raising the profile of Darlington outside the region more generally. Cabinet have therefore decided it is right to work closely with the proposers of Project Vane, with the Arts Council and others, to see whether this proposal can be brought to fruition.

45. The existing Arts Centre will close in July. Officers have been meeting with all tenants, regular users and hirers of the Arts Centre to discuss with them the closure of the Arts Centre, to explore their plans for the future and to see how DBC can facilitate or support this transition. A number of strands are starting to emerge to shape the interim offer.
- (a) A new Community Art Gallery is being created in Crown Street Library, which will provide an excellent exhibition space for local artists in an ideal Town Centre location. The first exhibition will be the Dover Prize Exhibition which will run from 17 May – 23 June with work being exhibited simultaneously in both the new Gallery and also in the Lounge Gallery at the Arts Centre.
 - (b) A number of visual arts organisations and artists have shown an interest in relocating from the Arts Centre to The Bridge, a former school site now empty, off Hundens Lane. This spacious single story site is well located for public transport and should be able to provide flexible accommodation for a range of users and hirers, including the Openart Studio (a social prescription project around positive mental health, funded by PCT/NHS Darlington in partnership with the Arts Centre), the Community Art Project, which enables adults with learning disabilities to engage in arts activities with the support of a practicing artist and Darlington Media Group, a co-operative of visual and media artists. A group of arts tutors currently employed to teach at the Arts Centre have also expressed an interest in offering a course programme, on an independent basis from the Bridge and there are also a number of arts organisations who currently hire space at the Arts Centre who may also be interested in relocating there.
 - (c) A number of arts clubs and societies have indicated that they would like to relocate their offer to the Dolphin Centre. To date these include, Darlington Music Society, Darlington Piano Society, Darlington New Orleans Jazz Club and Darlington R'n'B Club. Others are still considering options and may choose to join them. Some Arts Centre programming strands such as the Royal Geographical Society lecture series will also relocate to the Central Hall.
 - (d) Officers have also met with a range of potential venue providers around Darlington, who may have spaces and places suitable for arts groups and organisations needing to relocate, these include schools, community centres and commercial organisations. This has helped to broaden the options on offer beyond Council run premises and opens up opportunities for interesting new relationships and partnerships.

Creative Darlington

46. A first shadow meeting of the Creative Darlington Board, convened under the auspices of the Darlington Partnership, has been held. This is being set up to drive forward the strategic development of the Arts in Darlington, in accordance with the Visions for the Arts, 'Creative Darlington: Investing in a Creative Community', agreed by Darlington Partnership and the Cabinet. The Creative Darlington Board will be a group of knowledgeable, well-connected and influential people prepared to take responsibility for directing the future of the Arts, including senior business leaders with an involvement in the arts and with corporate commitment to corporate social responsibility, senior arts organisation leaders across the region who are being asked by Arts Council England to

take a role in developing specific sectors, arts professionals, senior education, community and communications leaders, and key public sector leaders, as well as a strong role for people who live and work in Darlington.

47. The Board will add value to the work of the Creative Darlington Network, which will support and engage with arts groups, artists, participants and providers. Darlington for Culture are working up proposals for this complementary part of the future landscape where the arts can continue to thrive with less public sector funding, but with the creative support and engagement of all sectors.

Head of Steam

48. The Hot Coals and Ash exhibition started in early April. The artist Steven Fox has just been made an Associate of the Guild of Railway Artists.
49. DARLOcomotion stage one application to Heritage Lottery Fund from Tees Valley Arts has been successful. This initiative, if successful, will provide arts based interpretation along parts of the old Stockton and Darlington Railway line.

Libraries

National Libraries Day

50. In total over 300 people engaged with events at the Library on the week leading up to National Libraries Day.

Library Access Points

51. Whilst response to the Library Access point at Carmel College has been disappointing, the service is working with Teesside University Darlington Campus Library to make a collection of fiction and children's books available in their library for the start of the new academic year in September. This Library Access point will offer much longer hours and will, we hope engage the student population with the public library service.

Art Gallery

52. Work continues to convert the large room at the East Street end of the Central Library to a Community Art Gallery.

Darlington Friends of Libraries

53. The Friends of Cockerton Library have agreed to become a Friends organisation for the whole library service. Their work starts with a Volunteers Open Day at Cockerton on 19 April 2012 from 1.00 pm to 6.00 pm, when we hope to encourage more people into support roles for the service. The Friends group will then move on to researching fund raising opportunities and considering what they might like to fund with any monies raised.

Environmental Services

Bowling Greens

54. Members will be aware that it was agreed as part of the 2011/12 Medium Term Financial Plan to close, with the exception of South Park, the bowling greens maintained by the Council. Work has however been ongoing with the bowling fraternity and agreement reached for the self-management of four greens from 1st April, 2012 (North Park, North Lodge Park, Eastbourne Park and Brinkburn Dene). Further, discussions are underway with bowling clubs utilising the Eastbourne Sports Complex bowls facility with a view to self-management transferring to those groups from 1 April 2013.

Aviary

55. Members will also be aware that as part of the 2012/13 Medium Term Financial Plan, closure of the aviary in South Park was approved. Discussions however with the Friends of South Park have resulted in the running of the aviary being transferred to the Friends from 1 April 2012.

Grounds Maintenance

56. Due to the incredibly mild weather in March, grass cutting operations commenced two weeks earlier than normal, as growth was accelerated.
57. Over the winter period, changes have been made to numerous floral displays within the town with two displays in particular seeing radical changes, these being at Salutation Road Roundabout and Haughton Road Cenotaph. Feedback to date has been positive in relation to changes made at both these prominent locations.

Winter Maintenance

58. Whilst road surface temperatures over the whole of the winter period have not been significantly milder than previous years, there has been no snow events experience this past winter and therefore stocks of rock salt held coming to the end of the period are higher than normal. As a result, the amount of rock salt required to top up for winter 2012/13 will be reduced and therefore a saving to the authority experienced.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio