
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

1. I am continuing to work with my Cabinet Colleagues, the Chief Executive and Directors in respect of the Council's finances, to ensure that the Council continues to provide quality services to the residents of the Borough, through the current difficult financial climate. As part of this work the draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2012/15 was considered and approved for consultation, at a special meeting of Cabinet held on 22 November, 2011. I together with other Members of Cabinet have attended a wide variety of consultation events. These have included general public meetings and sessions specifically for business, young people, people with disabilities, older people, the voluntary sector and Darlington Partnership. The results from that consultation will be considered by a special meeting of Cabinet scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 22 February, 2012 with the final Medium Term Financial Plan 2012/15 being considered by full Council on Thursday, 1 March, 2012.
2. I together with other Members of Cabinet have attended a wide variety of consultation events. These have included general public meetings and sessions specifically for business, young people, people with disabilities, older people, the voluntary sector and Darlington Partnership.
3. I attended a meeting to discuss the Foundation for Jobs at Darlington Campus of Teesside University on 12 January, 2012. This initiative, strongly driven by the business sector with us, will help deliver the strong links between educational establishments and employers. For those young people who have left/are preparing to leave school it will work to create better pathways to employment.
4. Darlington held the annual ceremony to commemorate the Holocaust Memorial Day on Thursday, 26th January, 2012, at Darlington Arts Centre, to mark the 67th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenbau. The theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day was 'Speak Up, Speak Out', which aimed at highlighting the dangers of not speaking up when experiencing, seeing or hearing injustice. The ceremony included a welcome from The Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Lee Vasey, a personal testimony from Joe Gellert, a representative of the Association of Jewish Refugees, an interpretative dance from St Bede's R.C. Primary School, readings, prayers and music from Janet Walke. We were very pleased to welcome the Lord Bishop of Durham, the Right Reverend Justin Portal Welby to the ceremony who provided a commemorative address. An exhibition of work produced by BTEC National Diploma Art and Design Students from Darlington College was available to view following the Ceremony.

Celebrating Success

5. The Social Norms Survey into use of alcohol has been carried out in six out of seven of Darlington's secondary schools and it is pleasing to note that this survey has shown a downward trend in both reported behaviour and perceptions about drinking for the third year in succession.
6. Following the retirement of the Lord Bishop of Durham Tom Wright, I attended a ceremony to welcome the new Bishop, Justin Portal Welby on his first official entry into the Diocese. Bishop Welby was formally greeted by the Mayor, Councillor Lee Vasey, on Croft Bridge where the 'handing over' of the Sockburn Falchion took place. Following this greeting a ceremony was held at the Dolphin Centre which was well attend by Councillors, Schools and Clergy from around the region.
7. I was delighted to be involved in the judging and presenting of an award at the Durham Police Authority Community Awards Event held on 1 December, 2011. The ceremony acknowledges the work that is done by the community and rewards them for this work.

Policing and Community Safety

8. I have been in discussion with the Leader and Chief Executive of Durham County Council regarding the transition to Elected Police Commissioner. These discussions centre on the Policing and Crime Panel and other transition matters.
9. The tender process for the commissioning of an integrated adult Drug and Alcohol Recovery Treatment Service has now concluded, with the successful provider to be announced shortly. The Best Bar None Scheme 2011 was celebrated in style at a glitzy award ceremony at Bannatynes Hotel in November that saw the Tapas Bar take the overall winners title for the second year running. Also, in November, partners worked together to put on a range of awareness raising activities for Alcohol Awareness Week including a well-attended day of events in the town's Market Square.
10. The tender process for commissioning of domestic abuse services has been completed and the successful provider will also be announced shortly. Early in December I took part in launching an awareness raising campaign around domestic abuse which aims to highlight exactly what domestic abuse is and how victims and their families can get help. It is intended that the campaign will continue well into the new year using a variety of different methods, including advertising panels inside buses and on the back of car parking tickets.
11. In order to support the victims of domestic abuse, charities and organisations took the opportunity to spread the message that domestic abuse should not be tolerated, at Darlington's outdoor market during December. A stall was located in the market whereby staff and volunteers, including myself, took the opportunity to promote awareness of domestic abuse and to give out information to people who were affected by the issue or who had concerns about others.

12. I attended a Police Authority Stakeholder event on 28 November, 2011, at which I gave a presentation on the Darlington Community Safety Partnership's priorities for 2011/12. Although progress has been made against all five of the Partnership's priorities, I focussed mainly on two areas of work which showed effective partnership working namely domestic abuse and restorative justice.

Regional and Tees Valley Updates

13. **Durham Tees Valley Airport (DTVA)** - The Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Leadership Board reviewed the position of DTVA. It discussed marketing and promotion, links to key businesses, the position of the air line operators and potential buyers.
14. **Growing Places Fund** - The TVU Leadership Board agreed the criteria for projects within the Tees Valley. The criteria focuses on the strategic regeneration projects in the sub region together with the Government's own criteria for unlocking stalled regeneration projects and recycling of investments within the LEP area. I am hopeful that this will be of assistance to Central Park, Darlington's priority regeneration project.
15. **Regional Growth Fund 3** - Regional Growth Fund 3 is expected to be announced this month with closing dates for applications anticipated to be in May. I have encouraged the LEP to support the concept of a package of projects that might assist small and medium sized businesses and therefore meet more squarely the business opportunities in Darlington.

Bill Dixon
Leader