
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

1. The Council continues to face a significant financial challenge. Contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan, which was approved by a special meeting of this Council in March, a £2M savings target was identified in respect of WHO delivers services. A report on implementing the Council's Business Model including recommendations relating to the Strategic Options for Place Project, which focused on WHO would deliver Place based services in future, was considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 3rd April 2012. A number of recommendations were made by Cabinet which would contribute towards the Council achieving that savings target.
2. Although a large number of budget savings were made in the last Medium Term Financial Plan, we anticipate needing to identify further savings of £9.4M by 2016/17 from a current net budget of £80.6M. I, along with my Cabinet colleagues, are continuing to work with officers to identify where those savings could be achieved.
3. The Council is currently holding £927,245 of Performance Reward Grant monies as a result of the successful achievement of a number of objectives within the Local Area Agreement which concluded in March 2009. A number of projects were considered and approved by Cabinet that would benefit from receiving this money all of which would contribute to the Darlington Partnership's action priorities for 2012, thereby enhancing delivery of key partnership actions to meet the outcomes of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
4. I have continued to undertake Business Engagement Visits to companies in the Borough. As part of these visits I recently met with John Mowbray, Head of Corporate Affairs, Northumbrian Water and a representative from DeepOcean Group Holding, the parent company of CTC Marine Projects Ltd.
5. I attended the 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed' Assembly held on Wednesday, 18th April, 2012. The assembly was arranged in order to help shape the Delivery Plan for 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed' which will encompass the key priorities across the 'One Darlington: Perfectly Shaped' agenda in one place which could be complemented by operational delivery plans.

Celebrating Success

6. I was delighted to attend a joint Freedom of the Borough celebration which was held on Friday, 27th April, 2012, at Darlington College to confer the Freedom of the Borough of Darlington on John Williams and Alasdair MacConachie for their eminent services to the Borough.

7. Phase IV of the Arts in the Yards was launched on Wednesday, 2nd May, 2012, which I was very pleased to attend. Art in the Yards is a Darlington Borough Council/Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College award-winning joint project, which has created an open-air art gallery in Clark's and Buckton's Yards for large-scale student art.
8. The Darlington Partnership arranged the eighth 'Best of Darlington Awards', which were held on Friday, 23rd March, 2011, in order to recognise the achievements of some of the town's outstanding residents. The winner of this year's Citizen of the Year was Councillor Francis with Peter Richardson being awarded Young Citizen of the Year. The other categories and their winners were:- Sophie Ward, Contribution to Sport; Brian Llewellyn, Contribution to the Arts; Bussey and Armstrong Ltd., Contribution to Business; Nordic Pioneer and Darlington College, Contribution to the Environment; Owen Cundy, Academic Excellence; Karl Stirling, Vocational Excellence; Emily Harkin, Exceptional Student; Councillor Francis, Volunteer of the Year; Sajina Miah, Contribution to the Community (Adult); Peter Richardson, Contribution to the Community (Youth); Darlington Dementia Collaborative, Putting Darlington on the Map; James West, Darlington Thru The Lens; and Aimee Yule and Lance Corporal Steven Hughes, Chairman's Special Award.

Policing and Community Safety

9. I am pleased to see that the new integrated adult Drug and Alcohol Recovery Treatment Service 'Connected Recovery' is officially in place and was open for business from 1st April 2012. The service, delivered in partnership by NECA and NERAF, will be managed by Jayne Lighfoot (previously the Community Alcohol Service Manager), with Paul Walsh as Clinical Lead. This is a major step towards achieving a recovery oriented treatment system which will focus on successful, sustained outcomes for people in Darlington with substance misuse and alcohol issues, making Darlington a safer, healthier place for all.
10. The Government published its long-awaited Alcohol Strategy in March and the Alcohol Strategic Implementation Group (ASIG) has set up a Task and Finish Group to refresh the local strategy 'Safer Drinking Safer Darlington' to incorporate key themes/principles from the national one, as well as publishing an updated Alcohol Performance framework and underpinning Alcohol Harm Reduction Action Plan 2012/15.
11. The Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) Young People's Commissioning Group and Darlington Strategic Partnership have secured and agreed funding for 2012/13 to sustain the successful Drug and Alcohol Education Officer post. The post works with Darlington schools and colleges, raising awareness and promoting the positive messages from our Social Norms Surveys and is part of our effective preventative approach to addressing substance misuse.
12. The Supporting People contracts for domestic abuse support services have been awarded. Sanctuary Carr-Gomm will provide advice and support to women who are victims of domestic abuse and their children and Harbour will run the Freedom Programme.

13. The implementation of the Sexual Violence Strategy launched last year continues to progress and includes the development of a marketing plan, and improved processes around the sharing, analysis and response to intelligence around child sexual exploitation. A Child Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) came into post in February. She is based in the Meadowfield SARC.
14. An Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Escalation Matrix has been developed by Durham Constabulary in consultation with partner agencies. The matrix enables staff from organisations attending ASB incidents to score cases against both the severity of the incident and the victims' personal circumstances in order to bring consistency to the assessment of ASB cases and to ensure that the impact of ASB upon individual victims is assessed. This acknowledges the fact that impact may vary depending upon individual circumstances and particular vulnerabilities of some victims. Use of the matrix in Darlington began in April and will be reviewed in the summer.
15. The Community Safety Plan 2012/15 has been completed and sets out the Community Safety Partnership priorities which are reducing the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol; tackling anti-social behaviour; reducing offending and re-offending; working with families with multiple problems; and supporting vulnerable people (focus is upon domestic abuse, sexual violence and hate crime). The Plan sets out the context, achievements and actions in relation to each priority and will be reviewed annually to take account of emerging trends and new developments within the community safety arena.
16. In line with the other recent changes made to streamline partnership working in Darlington, the work that was previously carried out by the Community Safety Partnership Executive will now be done through the joint public sector officer arrangements. There are still a number of operational groups meeting to carry out specific interventions on anti-social behaviour, prolific offending and domestic abuse, for example, but in future the key priority actions on these will be done alongside a wider range of partners who are also involved in the health and well-being work and children and young people's work.

Regional and Tees Valley Updates

17. I attended the Tees Valley Leadership Board on the 28th March 2012. The Board considered and agreed recommendations for:-
 - (a) the allocation of Growing Places Funding and this was in line with the April's Cabinet's considerations as referred to in Councillor McEwan's report;
 - (b) the TVU budget position for 2011/12 and 2012/13;
 - (c) reports by Group Chairs on the major work streams of the Tees Valley Business Plan;
 - (d) the future arrangements for supporting Digital City in the Tees Valley. Again Councillor McEwan's report refers to this and the use of the Performance Reward Grant to support some penetration into Darlington;
 - (e) initial proposals to respond to the Regional Growth Fund (3) and particularly considerations around improving business access to finance; and

- (f) progress in securing the future of Durham Tees Valley Airport.
18. I have been attending meetings of the Airport Board.
 19. I have also been meeting with my counterparts and Chief Executives from Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland to oversee progress on the Three Borough Partnership.
 20. At a recent meeting of Tees Valley Leaders and Mayors, the Chief Executives, or their representatives, of the four main NHS Foundation Trusts spoke of their plans for health services. There was agreement on the need for close working

Bill Dixon
Leader