
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

1. You will be aware of the significant financial challenge the Council has and continues to face. We have agreed plans to reduce our spending by £23M but still we anticipate we need to make a further £10M reduction by 2016/17 from a net budget of £80M. When we consider that approximately £58M of the budget is spent on Adult and Children's Services we can see how difficult our next set of reductions will be. We are also facing much uncertainty about the level of Government funding we will receive for 2013/14 and beyond so our estimate of a further £10M reduction could be wrong either way.
2. I believe we have an excellent track record on consulting with the public on our budget proposals, therefore, to ensure this continues, at Cabinet we agreed to set a budget for 2013/14 on existing service levels and taxation plans. By doing this we will be able to fully understand our income and produce a full set of proposals for consultation in the spring of 2013, this will enable everyone to have sufficient time to respond to the consultation on what again will be a set of difficult decisions. Following consultation we will then commence implementation of the agreed proposals later in 2013. We are able to take this approach due to the fact that we have met the early financial challenges put in front of us and can now take a short period of time to consider all the options and a considered way to put the public of Darlington.
3. The Directors of Resources recently circulated a document from the Local Government Association (LGA) "Funding Outlook for Councils from 2010/11 to 2019/20" to all Members which demonstrates that all Councils will be facing the same challenges as Darlington in terms of reducing income. The report highlights that based on the LGA assumptions, that by 2019/20, if services such as social care, waste and concessionary fares remain fully funded then the remainder of services face a 90% reduction in funding. Whilst each authority may be slightly different, I would have to say unless there is a change in Government policy such reductions will have devastating impacts on boroughs such as Darlington.
4. The first meeting of the Shadow Health and Well Being Board was held on 12th June, 2012, at which I was appointed Chair for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2012/13. The Shadow Board was established by Cabinet at its special meeting held on 22nd May, 2012. I am looking forward to working with health colleagues in identifying and exploiting opportunities for collaboration.
5. The Council is continuing to work with the Darlington Partnership and the Northern Echo to deliver the 'Foundation for Jobs' campaign. Alongside this, working with our neighbouring local authorities, we have been successful in applying for the 'Flexible Support Fund' which provides a grant to employers to take on unemployed young individuals (between 18 and 24 years of age) and provide on the job training. It is schemes such as these that will assist businesses in planning ahead and making sure they have a

workforce fit for a prosperous future.

6. I attended the meeting of the Darlington Partnership Board held on 11th July, 2012, at which a number of items were discussed including the draft Economic Strategy, a One Darlington: Perfectly Placed Delivery Strategy and revised working arrangements for the Partnership. On the same day a Darlington Partnership Networking event was held to enable Members of the Board to chat and network informally. This is the second such event and has proved to be a great success with Board Members.
7. I was very pleased to attend a service at Durham Cathedral on Saturday, 2nd June, 2012, to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen. Many events were organised throughout the town to celebrate the Jubilee including the lighting of beacons at a number of venues including the Town Hall, Teesside University Darlington Campus and Lingfield Point. These beacons were three of the 2012 that were lit across the UK to commemorate the Jubilee.
8. The Olympic Torch flame was carried through Darlington on Sunday, 17th June, 2012. Many thousands of people lined the route to welcome the torch and the torchbearers along the route which started at Beaumont Hill, down North Road, along St. Cuthbert's Way to the finish point at the Darlington College. Street theatre, jugglers and stilt walkers entertained the crowds along the route.
9. The fourth Armed Forces Day 'Fly a Flag for Our Armed Forces' ceremony was held on Monday, 25th June, 2012. This is an annual ceremony, and enables the whole nation to show their appreciation for the contribution made by all those who serve, or who have served, in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. The flag was raised over the Town Hall at 10.30 a.m. followed by a prayer, read by the Reverend Robert Williamson from St. Cuthbert's Church. The ceremony was welcomed by all those veterans in attendance.

Regional and Tees Valley Updates

10. I continue to attend a number of regional meetings including the Association of North East Council Member Meeting and its Leaders and Elected Mayors Group; Tees Valley Leaders and Mayors Group; and Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) Leadership Board. A special meeting of the TVU Leadership Board was held on 11th June, 2012, which I attended, was called to discuss Regional Growth Fund(3). I supported the Board's decisions to endorse and support applications for:-
 - (a) A Tees Valley Business Loan Fund
 - (b) An enhanced Apprenticeship Programme (that builds on the Foundation for Jobs initiative)
 - (c) "Let's Grow" grant scheme for SME's
 - (d) Advanced Manufacturing Bond Scheme
 - (e) Business Start up Fund, and
 - (f) Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative
11. All of these applications would meet needs identified in both the Tees Valley Business Plan and Darlington's emerging Economic Strategy.

12. In addition the Board endorsed individual applications from the private sector, including Project Vane and an application from Durham Tees Valley Airport for infrastructure works to support the airport.
13. I continue to attend meetings of the Durham Tees Valley Airport Board.
14. 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. A number of roadshows for staff in relation to the initiative have been arranged.

Policing and Community Safety

15. I continue to attend the quarterly Community Safety Briefings. The last meeting was held on 15th May, 2012, at which a number of updates were received from the Anti-Social Behaviour Group; Vulnerability Group; Re-offending Group; and the Drugs and Alcohol Group. Updates were also received on high impact families and partnership organisation.
16. I was pleased to attend the launch of two initiatives, namely the 'Voice Project', which is a unique partnership supporting victims of domestic violence and harassment and the 'Listening and Learning: Improving Support for Victims in County Durham and Darlington' which was set up to encourage Police and Crime Commissioners to make victims' issues a priority.
17. The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) through the Vulnerability Group has adopted hate crime as one of its priorities. A Hate Crime Profile is being compiled by an analyst from Durham Constabulary in order to provide the CSP with a clear picture of the situation in Darlington. A Hate Crime Workshop is planned to take place in October to enable an action plan to be developed in order to tackle this important issue.
18. The annual Summer Nights campaign began earlier this month and is a multi-agency operation to target and reduce domestic burglary, burglary other and theft from motor vehicles across the borough of Darlington during the summer months, and to prevent anti-social behaviour (ASB) by engendering a sense of community spirit amongst school pupils through participation in Junior Neighbourhood Watch.
19. A new Junior Neighbourhood Watch programme was launched in the town in January this year in three schools (Springfield Primary, Corporation Road Primary and St Augustine's Primary). The schools have all found the programme very beneficial in helping to develop a sense of community, and the CSP wishes to consolidate this work by rolling out the programme to other schools, with the ultimate aim of continuing to reduce ASB in the town by working with schools. The programme will be delivered to Year 5 pupils over ten weeks. The programme is multi-agency, with sessions being delivered by Durham Constabulary, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, this Council's Environmental Services Department, North East Ambulance Service, Royal National Lifeboat Service and the British Transport Police.
20. This Council, in partnership with the voluntary sector has applied to become an accredited White Ribbon Town. This initiative aims to increase awareness of domestic violence and to show commitment to addressing and altering social norms that lead to violent behaviour against women, involving men in prevention activities and providing activities that reduce

the incidence of domestic violence.

21. The accreditation as a White Ribbon Town will benefit Darlington's reputation as it will show support for local organisations who are delivering the Domestic Abuse Strategy and also in terms of giving a clear message that Darlington is being pro-active in addressing this issue and preventing re-occurrence.
22. At the first Community Safety Seminar held on 26th June, 2012, the public signing of the White Ribbon Campaign to make Darlington a White Ribbon town took place and I signed the 'White Ribbon Campaign' on behalf of the town.
23. Delivering new approaches to restorative justice is a community safety priority for the CSP this year. To support this, this Council has allocated some government funding it has received (£50,000) to support the delivery of this priority. The aim is that our work in tackling lower level crimes and ASB among adults will strongly complement the work our colleagues in Probation are taking forward with re-offenders in relation to more serious crime. We also plan to learn from the good work that colleagues in the Youth Offending Service have been doing around restorative practice with young people.
24. Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) Update:-
 - (a) The new adult, integrated Drug and Alcohol Recovery Treatment Service is now up and running, with an official launch to be confirmed in the next few weeks;
 - (b) In response to the new Government Alcohol Strategy, the DAAT is hosting an Alcohol Assembly on July 10th. Partners and stakeholders are being invited to attend to look at alcohol-related issues including; the potential local impact of Minimum Unit Pricing and the development of priorities for the local refreshed Alcohol Strategy;
 - (c) As part of the delivery of Darlington Partnership's Alcohol Priority Action Plan, the DAAT is working with partners and local employers to roll out an adult, workplace version of the successful Social Norms survey carried out with young people in schools; and
 - (d) The young people's SWITCH substance misuse service ended the financial year having exceeded stretch targets set for numbers in treatment and successful completions.

Bill Dixon
Leader