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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:-
  - (a) We gave consideration to endorsing elements of former national planning guidance that should continue to be relied on in taking decisions on planning applications. We recommended to Council that specific technical and procedural guidance be agreed as interim planning policy that could be a material consideration in making decisions on planning applications, until they are included in an appropriate adopted development plan document or supplementary planning document.
  - (b) **Business Engagement update** – There is a big drive on engagement with businesses. The Business Engagement Team has allocated individual visit schedules to allow a more involved and direct approach to working with and supporting Darlington businesses. A target list of c. 70 businesses has been identified, chosen on the basis of either large scale employers or businesses operating in growth sectors of the economy. Senior Members and Officers have been tasked with establishing even closer working relationships with these businesses in order to further understand their needs both now and in the future.

In addition, members of the Business Engagement team have embarked upon a series of proactive business visits across the Borough. The intention is to visit every known business, ward by ward, to distribute information on business support available locally; to take enquiries and obtain up to date contact information. To date, Bank Top; Lascelles; Lingfield and Central wards have been completed. Given that there are over 3,000 businesses across the Borough, this exercise will be conducted over a couple of months.

- (c) **Railway Heritage Enquiry Group** – On the 9th November the Railway Heritage Enquiry Group met to agree the next steps towards the cherishing and celebration of Darlington's railway heritage. The Group discussed business models and finding the best means of the community, partners, the industry and the Council to work together, securing funding and making the most of the opportunity to create jobs and boost the economy, using this as the catalyst.

In a speech delivered to the National English Heritage Champions Conference at the Painters Hall, London on Monday 12th November by Baroness Andrews OBE, the work of myself with the Darlington Railway Heritage Enquiry Group was cited as an inspirational example of a local heritage champion working in

partnership with the community to celebrate and protect the historic environment. The supporting role of the Northern Echo, as partner and a historic newspaper in its own right and promoter of the work of the Group, was also recognised.

- (d) **Central Park Update** - Following the Cabinet endorsement of the refreshed Masterplan in May 2012, a planning application for the comprehensive scheme was submitted in the Summer and approved in September 2012. The full scheme, comprising up to 500 new family homes, a local centre and 28,000 sqm commercial developments, including a hotel and potential Innovation Centre. Phase 1, which has full planning permission, will deliver 324 family homes, including 20 affordable homes and the linear park.

The Council is continuing to advance the pedestrian and cycle route which will link the University and College, across the south of the site to Yarm Road and onto Bank Top Station. A planning application has been submitted and it is anticipated that it will be considered by the Planning Applications Committee in December, with construction commencing early in 2013. The target date for the completion of this pedestrian and cycle route is April 2013.

- (e) **Feethams Cinema and Hotel Development** – Terrace Hill Limited have won the contract to deliver the cinema and hotel development on the Feethams site adjoining the Town Hall. It is particularly pleasing that a local company employing local architects that know Darlington will be progressing this important leisure development for the Town. It is anticipated that a formal planning application will be submitted in the New Year with a goal of having the development operational by September 2014. The scheme is a further sign of confidence in Darlington and will be a significant boost for the Town Centre economy and jobs.
- (f) **Regional Growth Fund** – It is with regret that none of the bids by Darlington companies have been successful. However, the LEP has been successful in gaining support for a Business Grant scheme to be administered through the Business Enterprise Group and an innovative Bond Guarantee scheme. Subject to due diligence procedures these schemes will benefit Darlington business. I am writing to the Secretary of State to support Peel and MPs seeking re consideration of the bid from the Airport Southside Development.
- (g) **City Deal** – The Government has invited the Tees Valley authorities through the LEP to formulate a City Deal bid. This is about the consolidation and focusing of resources on economic priorities together with new powers or freedoms to act to deliver economic objectives. It is anticipated that an expression of interest will be confirmed in December 2012 by the five Tees Valley Councils and the TVU LEP Board with a view to working up a detailed proposal for submission in 2013. The detailed timetable has yet to be clarified. This is a further recognition of the strengths of the collaborative approach within the Tees Valley through the LEP to deliver economic objectives.

- (h) **Foundation for Jobs Campaign Update** – Foundation for Jobs has continued to make good progress against its targets. We are continuing to develop apprenticeships with local firms and expect the total to be in the region of 90 by the end of November.

In respect of internships, we expect to have placed more than 100 youngsters – and exceeded the initial target of 100 – before the end of the calendar year. The target for young people in receipt of entrepreneurial skills training (50) was exceeded back in August. By mid-November we had engaged with 959 school age pupils against a target of 1,000 experiencing some form of business interface by March 2013.

The development of the ‘Make £5 Grow’ project with Virgin Money means that 187 primary age pupils have been engaged in the project across four schools in Darlington. Virgin Money are running a pilot in Darlington, whereby pupils are given £5 each and are tasked with making a profit through whatever means they come up with. The initial £5 ‘seed’ capital is paid back to Virgin Money, and any resulting profits are retained by the schools. This is the first time that this project has been delivered in the Tees Valley.

A day to raise awareness of apprenticeships, involving two young employees from Stillington-based Darchem, as well as work preparation sessions at Hummersknott School involved 250 pupils.

Forty pupils have been involved in a project with Durham Tees Valley Airport whilst a bridge building event, in co-operation with the Institution of Civil Engineers, has involved around 250 pupils.

The support of the Bishop of Durham as patron has been invaluable and we all wish him well in his new role.

- (i) **Darlington Town Centre Retail Awards** - This year's Awards are imminent and we are delighted with the response from town centre businesses that are being judged and mystery shopped by a local market research company and are very much looking forward to the ‘Oscar-style’ ceremony on Wednesday 14 December.
- (j) **Town Centre Heritage Trail** - Work is underway on the production of an updated Heritage Trail guide as the 10,000 printed guides originally produced are dwindling fast. The Trail has been adopted by local businesses and the Leader who are offering guided tours of the town and the Town Hall, giving the trail an exciting new marketing angle.
- (k) **High Street Innovation Fund (HSIF)** – This project aims to improve the condition and appearance of vacant town centre units, and together with financial incentives, work towards occupying units. Although the response to initial communications with landlords and agents was disappointing, work continues to develop each individual part of the project. A meeting with local commercial property agents held this month enabled positive discussion and

routes into progressing individual cases. Following town centre walkabouts with potential contractors, quotes have been received for cleaning/tidying and painting of the ground floor frontages in most need. These improvements will be carried out as each landlord/leaseholder approval is received. Enquiries have been received from local entrepreneurs regarding using available vacant units, either on a long term lease or a short term use (pop up shop), and the HSIF is supporting these ventures as much as possible.

- (l) **Teesside University – Enterprise Development Programme 2012-2013 –** Darlington businesses continue to benefit from a range of enterprise development workshops developed by Teesside University in partnership with Darlington Borough Council, which are running at their Darlington Campus over the next 12 months. The first of these workshops was held on 17 October 2012 and is part of a series of workshops within the ‘path to success’ programme. Further workshops in the series that have been delivered to date include: a workshop focused on the importance of building relationships and networks to support business aims and a session examining social media and how businesses can capitalise on the potential this new media offers whilst avoiding some of the pitfalls many newcomers face.
- (m) **Distinct Darlington (Business Improvement District) -** The projects within the BID business plan continue to be rolled out, led by BID Manager Alex Swan, with direction from the BID Board. The team of Rangers have been appointed and trained, and are now an established part of the town centre environment, working to help both businesses and the public. The first major BID event, a festive Ice Rink, starts today and continues until 6 January 2013. The event has been organised with Council support and assistance throughout its planning and implementation.

## 2. Formal Food Safety Enforcement Actions

- (a) Xiao Ming Chen trading as the Spice Inn at 45 Bondgate, Darlington on 2/10/12 accepted a simple caution for four specimen food hygiene offences found on 5 September 2012 during a routine inspection when the premises were open for business. Xiao Ming Chen acknowledged the contraventions and showed a willingness to rectify the failures.
- (b) Tin Sang Chan trading as the Wei Lam at 32 Larchfield Street pleaded guilty to six food hygiene offences at Darlington Magistrates Court on 27/09/12. He was fined £100 for each offence and £100 costs were awarded to DBC. A Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice was served to immediately close the premises and the Magistrates confirmed this action when they issued a Prohibition Order. Upon completion of the necessary improvements the business was allowed to reopen.
- (c) Chusak Phetmalaikul, the Managing Director of Pawin Thai Ltd entered guilty pleas at Darlington Magistrates Court 27/09/12 to six food hygiene offences found during a programmed routine inspection of The Royal Thai Restaurant 94-96 Parkgate, Darlington on 18 July 2012. A Hygiene

Emergency Prohibition Notice was used to immediately close the business and Magistrates confirmed this action when they issued a Prohibition Order. The business was allowed to reopen when the remedial works were completed.

- (d) Chusak Phetmalaikul, the Managing Director Pawin Thai Ltd had already appeared before Darlington Magistrates' Court on 16 May and entered guilty pleas to 6 food safety charges and 2 gas safety charges relating to conditions found at the premises on 26 January 2012 and 1 February 2012. The company was fined £200 for each food offence (total £1200) and £250 for each gas safety offence (total £500) and £375 towards Council costs. On 11 October the Magistrates banned Mr Chusak Phetmalaikul for a minimum of 6 months from operating a food business and fined him £110 for each offence and awarded all of the Council costs.
  - (e) Food Poisoning Outbreak – June 2010 – An investigation into an outbreak of food poisoning affecting 31 people who ate or prepared food at the Copper Beech public house between 2-21 June 2012 has now been concluded with the publication, on 1 October 2012, of the report of the Outbreak Control Team. The cause was identified as Salmonella enteritidis bacteria. All persons identified as cases of food poisoning associated with the incident have received a letter acknowledging their assistance and the conclusions reached.
3. **Albert Hill Skip Hire** – Officers of the Council are continuing to coordinate their actions with other enforcement agencies to address the issues and find solutions posed by Albert Hill Skip Hire at locations in Durham and Darlington. Raymond Antony Shepherd was arrested on 12 October when officers from the Environment Agency supported by the police observed waste materials being deposited at Dodsworth Street in breach of the bail conditions and has been remanded to appear in Court on 26 October. The Environment Agency is also prosecuting for waste management offences identified since 2010.
4. Since the last meeting of Council I have :-
- (a) Undertaken a Town Centre Walkabout to highlight immediate areas of concern and acted upon them to ensure the town is clean, presentable and promoted well;
  - (b) Taken the opportunity to undertake Town Centre retailer visits in order to engage with businesses in the Town and offer the services and support of the Town Centre Management Team;

- (c) Attended an introductory meeting with the newly appointed Green Economy Officer who will focus on the Green Economy and Carbon Management matters. The Carbon Management Plan provides the framework for the identification of key priority projects that will deliver both carbon and efficiency savings for the Council. The appointment of the Green Economy Officer in October 2012, will help accelerate the delivery of key priority projects in partnership with other departments across the Council. Key to the success of the Carbon Management Plan will also be the identification of appropriate external funding sources to match existing commitments, and, working closely in partnership with stakeholder organisations across all sectors in Darlington.

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