
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

1. I continue to Chair meetings of the Shadow Health and Well Being Board and have also had a useful meeting with the Clinical Commissioning Group Chair and Chief Officer. A number of issues have been discussed and there is growing understanding of the opportunities for collaboration. A work programme has been established for future meetings of the Board with reports being submitted by the Council, Clinical Commissioning Group and voluntary organisations.
2. The Local Government Boundary Commission is to carry out a review of the ward boundaries in the Darlington area. The aim of the review is to ensure that each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors. At the present time the councillor for one of the wards (Faverdale), represents 46% more voters than the average and this has prompted the review. I have been appointed as a Member of the Members' Working Group which has been established as part of the review process, the first meeting of which was held on 6th November, 2012. A presentation will be given by representatives from the Commission on the Review elsewhere on this agenda.
3. I attended the meeting of the Darlington Partnership Board held on 12th September, at which a number of items were discussed including the progress of Darlington Football Club, Darlington's One Darlington: Perfectly Placed Delivery Plan and the Economic Strategy. I am particularly interested in an initiative which the Partnership has inspired called Darlington Cares. Darlington Cares will bring together the skills and expertise of local businesses and their employees to make a positive difference to the local community through a range of initiatives developed by working with local people. A Programme Manager, Katie Blundell, took up post on 22 October and work is underway to develop the initiatives initial programme.
4. The draft Health and Well Being Strategy was considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 9th October, 2012, prior to being considered by this Council. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires Local Authorities through Health and Well Being Boards to prepare a joint Health and Well Being Strategy based on their Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The Strategy was also considered and endorsed by the Shadow Health and Well Being Board at its meeting held in September.
5. I welcome the announcement of the leisure development at Feethams and anticipate that this will play a very significant role in our plans to enhance the town centre.

6. With the Darlington MP and Chief Executive I have established a Group to work with managers from the Department for Education (DfE) to identify suitable premises in Darlington for staff relocating from Mowden Hall. We have a longstanding relationship with the DfE and there is a very strong economic case to retain these vital jobs in Darlington. We will draw on the support of Tees Valley Unlimited, as well as our own officers, to develop options.
7. It was pleasing to note that the Annual Letter of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) in relation to complaints and educational appeals against the authority, was once again positive, with the Council continuing to respond to initial enquiries within 28 days and no maladministration reports being received during 2011/12. Whilst the Council saw an increase in the overall number of complaints it received during 2011/12 fewer complainants referred their complaint to the LGO.
8. A revised timetable for a decision to be made on the future of the former Arts Centre on Vane Terrace was agreed by Cabinet. The decision to extend the timetable was agreed to allow more time for the Project Vane proposers to receive a decision from the Arts Council on their grant application and to pull together the other elements of their funding package. Should the Project Vane project go ahead the benefits of Project Vane would be substantial in relation to 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed', in relation to 'Creative Darlington: Investing in a Creative Community' and in relation to the Economic Strategy.
9. I was delighted to back the publicity to launch the re-opening of the former King's Head Hotel in Priestgate. The hotel, now known as the Mercure Darlington King's Hotel was devastated by fire four years ago. The hotel has undergone a £6m complete refurbishment bringing much needed employment to the town.
10. I continue to make contact with businesses through the Council's Business Engagement Programme and visits to the retail sector are also included.
11. The introduction of my 'Meet the Leader' sessions, as promoted in the Darlington Together magazine, has had a positive take up and I am pleased to be able to offer Darlington residents a direct approach to meeting me and discussing issues they feel strongly about.
12. I was invited to meet with East Coast Authorities to discuss Economic Development and the East Coast Mainline. This gave me the opportunity to discuss the franchise consultation, quality improvement within the rail network services and how we can best work together to deliver excellent transport links.
13. I was recently asked to share my political experiences with Emily O'Hara, Darlington's Member of Youth Parliament. Emily was preparing for Local Democracy Week and a Question Time event that I may even be asked to take part in.
14. The signing of an Armed Forces Covenant Charter took place on 9 November, 2012.

15. I along with Alex Blackham, are giving residents the opportunity to receive a tour of Darlington and its Town Hall, free of charge. A number of tours have already been held with further tours being arranged in the future. The tours are open to all residents and it is hoped that they will give residents the chance to discover some of their town's hidden history.

Regional and Tees Valley Updates

16. **Tees Valley Leadership Board** - The Leadership Board on the 24 October considered the current and future position in relation to European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) and its role in delivering the Tees Valley Statement of Ambition. Equally, an update was received about the Homes and Community Agency Investment Plan. Both of these funding sources will be important to a City Deal opportunity as explained below. The Board also received progress reports in relation to Sector Plans.
17. **Regional Growth Fund** - It is regrettable that the Tees Valley Airport RGF bid was unsuccessful, which would have boosted the delivery of associated employment land at the Durham Tees Valley Airport. Nevertheless the Council, together with other local authorities, Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Peel Holdings are continuing to work together to improve the position of the airport.
18. **City Deal** - It is encouraging news that the Government has invited the Tees Valley Local Authorities to submit a bid for City Deal status. This is also referred to in Councillor McEwan's portfolio report. I will be working with the LEP Board to ensure that an appropriate submission is made that maximises the economic benefits to Darlington and the Tees Valley.

Policing and Community Safety

19. Darlington Community Safety Partnership ran a Hate Crime Workshop to explore the issue of hate crime, including how it impacts on victims and what support is available to them. The workshop was well attended with representatives from a wide range of organisations. I was pleased to attend this event.
20. Darlington has hosted an event led by the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) to review Domestic Homicide. Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) were established on a statutory basis under section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. The provision came into force on 13 April 2011. I was pleased to Chair this important event.
21. During half term week Operation Staysafe was launched to help keep our young people safe. The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team and Darlington Police spent time out-and-about to help keep young people safe and tackle underage drinking on streets and parks across the Borough.

22. I attended an event arranged by the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) on the Whole System Approach to Core Data Set Changes – implications and benefits of connecting data capture and analysis to drug and alcohol treatment delivery.

Bill Dixon
Leader