
OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Economy and Regeneration Portfolio.

Assets of Community Value Operational Policy

2. Cabinet has approved the revised procedures and arrangements within the Operational Policy, to implement duties under the Localism Act 2011 relating to the 'Community Right to Bid' which came into force on 12 October 2012.
3. The Act allows certain defined community groups to nominate assets of community value which the Council must determine and either approve or reject.
4. Since legislation came into force seven nominations have been received, all of which have been approved, using the current operational policy.
5. The Policy was required to be updated to reflect changes to posts necessitated by the recent restructure.

Strategic Economic Plan for the Tees Valley

6. Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership submitted the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan to Government on 31 March. This included a bid for £62m in capital funding through the Local Growth Fund for 2015/16, for projects across the Tees Valley.
7. The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) presents our proposal to generate economic growth and new jobs in the Tees Valley. To achieve this, the SEP set focus on six priorities:
 - (a) Develop and nurture an innovation culture and positive environment for business growth;
 - (b) Secure the transformation of Tees Valley into a Low Carbon High Value economy;
 - (c) Secure improved skills levels to address future demand in growth sectors and in existing industries;
 - (d) Secure additional capacity on the East Coast Main Line rail route and improve rail services to major northern cities and within the Tees Valley;

- (e) Improve air, road, port, land and property infrastructure to enable economic growth; and
 - (f) Create and retain wealth by establishing the Tees Valley as a preferred location to live in, work and visit.
8. Darlington's excellent transport connectivity, education services and quality of place mean that we are well placed to achieve growth in jobs and economic output. As reported previously Darlington is focusing on the key potential growth sectors of Biologics, Subsea, Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, Logistics and Public Sector/Service Sector; on increasing workforce skills and supporting business start-ups and growth within small medium enterprises (SME).
9. The Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan identifies Central Park as a key area of growth and to facilitate further development at Central Park includes an £11m Local Growth Fund (LGF) bid (2015/16). This funding will deliver enabling infrastructure (road junction, utility provision and public realm works). A further £16m bid is identified for 2016/17 supporting the delivery of the 'National Horizons Centre'. This will be a single place of expertise, facilities and people to meet the training and innovation of the new 'leading edge' horizon industries, biologics, industrial biotechnology, subsea engineering and digital manufacture and design. The National Horizon Centre is also integral to the Centre for Processing and Innovation's "Factories of the Future" proposals for a second phase of facilities complimenting the National Biologics Manufacturing Centre.
10. The Government response on the Tees Valley SEP and its LGF application is due in July 2014.

Central Park North Residential

11. The Council has successfully relocated its operations from the Hundens Lane Depot to the new facility at Allington Way and Lingfield Way. This was achieved in advance of the vacant possession date within the Central Park Sale Agreement. The relocation has enabled Keepmoat to draw down the depot office site which is scheduled for demolition in April. A further phase is scheduled to be transferred to Keepmoat towards the end of April to enable infrastructure to be delivered for the 20 affordable units scheduled for completion before March 2015.
12. The show homes were opened in April with an official launch in May. There have already been reservations on site.

Darlington Business Growth Hub

13. Construction work for the £6.6m project has started on site in March 2014 at South Central Park. Willmott Dixon, as main contractor, will achieve the building program by March 2015. A ground breaking ceremony with major funders Homes and Community Agency (HCA) and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) took place on 11 March 2014 and has been reported in the local media.

14. The 3,200 square metre building with meeting room and conferences facilities will be operated for the Council by the North East BIC (Business Innovation Centre) which won the operator tender contract in February 2014. It will be engaged in the construction process and apply their expertise to pre-letting and branding strategy. It will also be shaping the building design for optimal use of start-ups and small SME's to move in to also gain access to innovative Business Services and vital networking facilities.

National Biologics Manufacturing Centre

15. Negotiations and contracts were successfully completed between the Centre for Process Innovation (CPI), the Council and the Homes and Community agency for the sale and lease of land at South Central Park. Contracts for the main site, extension plot and car parking areas, were exchanged on 9 April 2014.
16. A ground breaking ceremony by the main funder Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) through the Technology Strategy Board (TSB) was held on 16 April 2014 on site. At this ceremony significant compliments were paid to the Borough Council and its staff in facilitating and delivering this opportunity in challenging timescales. This is testimony to the "can do" culture of the Council and growing confidence in Darlington and a place to invest.
17. Interserve will be acting as the main constructor for the £25m landmark building which will put Darlington on the map as a commercialisation centre for biologics and pharmaceutical research.

Town Centre Conference

18. Over 100 people attended the Darlington Town Centre Conference on 27 March. The event was a joint initiative between the Council and Distinct Darlington. Ian Taylor a Distinct Board Member chaired the event, which included presentations from Mike Airey (Chair of Darlington Partnership's Private Sector Economy Group) and Richard Shepherd (White Young Green- retail consultant), plus four themed workshops considering planning policy issues, the future of the indoor and outdoor market, the leisure offer and adapting to the digital economy.
19. The Conference was a successful event, generating positive ideas about how the Town Centre should adapt to changes in leisure and shopping behaviour.
20. From the findings presented by Richard Shepherd, the economic downturn and changing lifestyles have affected all Town Centres including Darlington. However Darlington Town Centre has performed better than the national and regional average (in terms of number of vacant units and rental values).
21. Data on number of vacant units presented showed that in December 2013 10.8 per cent of units were vacant, an improvement on the 13 per cent empty units in 2009 and better than the UK average of 11.6 per cent. More recent data collected by the Council's Economy and business engagement team puts the figure at 9.8 per cent of units vacant for April 2014.

22. The analysis undertaken for the retail study also showed that Darlington Town Centre has a catchment population of around 300,000 people, with an annual expenditure of £530m on grocery items and £785m on non- food goods.
23. The full list of comments captured at the workshops is available on a 'Town Conference' web page on the Council's website. Officers are now working in partnership with Distinct Darlington to consider the findings from the Conference and to shape a series of proposed short, medium and long term actions.

Business Start-up/New Business Support

24. The Enterprise Officer, funded through the Local Area Agreement performance reward grant, provides a first point of contact for people planning to start up a new business. Helping potential new businesses to develop a business plan and signposting them to other support and funding schemes.
25. As at 3 April, covering a period of eleven months since the start of the Enterprise Officer role, 156 unique clients have been advised (32 in the last two months); of which 46 have been referred to further business support and up to (the most recently available data) 32 new businesses had started up.
26. The Enterprise Officer also provides advice and support to newly established businesses and self-employed individuals. Up to 3 April, 34 newly established and existing businesses had received support.

High Street Innovation Fund

27. Almost the entire £100,000 budget has now been spent or allocated. The fund has supported 35 new businesses in opening (or who are about to open) and has therefore importantly helped occupy 35 previously vacant properties.

Foundation for Jobs – Duke of York Visit

28. HRH the Duke of York was able to see for himself the work going on in Darlington to tackle youth unemployment when he visited Foundation for Jobs on 7 March. The Duke, who has a remit based around young people and employability, visited three schemes linked to the project, which has worked with more than 2,700 young people since its launch two years ago.
29. After a lunchtime briefing on the work of the Foundation the Duke was able to see for himself the new subsea training centre C- STATE (Centre for Subsea Technology Awareness, Training and Education) developed in partnership between Modus Subsea Intervention, MTCS (Subsea Training provider) Teesside University, Darlington College, Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) and Darlington Borough Council. C-STATE is a unique collaboration of the private, education and public sector to close the acute skills gap in the high growth sector of subsea engineering and renewables in the UK. As a private sector led project future plans for further expansion to the C-STATE concept in Darlington is likely to be backed by industry and public funders to create further competitive growth.

30. The Duke then visited Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College where pupils from all seven secondary schools in Darlington were spending the day building a working hovercraft with a team from Bradford University to inspire their interest in engineering and challenge the perceptions of many that it was a 'dirty' industry.
31. Finally the Duke visited Bike Stop, a social enterprise which takes old bicycles and recycles them for sale. Whilst there he met a young apprentice who had been helped by Foundation for Jobs and was now being trained to the same standards of those involved in Tour de France teams.

Encouraging Engineering

32. The Encouraging Engineering scheme started in the September term 2010 when four students were appointed. Three more students were appointed in 2011; three in 2012 and two in 2013 making a total of 13 students.
33. This Summer we have two students from the first group coming to the end of their degree course and both of them have been offered permanent full-time employment with three of the companies in the scheme.
34. There were two new starters this academic year including our first female on the scheme.
35. Students from Queen Elizabeth and Carmel sixth forms attended an open day on 26 February 2014 at Cummins. Following the event two high calibre students were recruited to join the scheme, starting in September 2014.

Workshop for European Cooperation North East England and the Ruhr

36. In March through an initiative jointly coordinated by the Association for North East Councils (ANEC) and Metropol Ruhr, staff and elected representatives from north east local authorities and the Ruhr valley cities of Essen, Mulheim, Oberhausen and Gelsenkirchen took part in a workshop to explore opportunities for cooperation on the delivery of shared economic policy goals.
37. Councillor Nutt, the Council's Economy Manager and the Director of Business Investment at Tees Valley Unlimited, attended a workshop for European Cooperation.
38. Topics discussed at the workshop included:
 - (a) Strategies for reducing energy use and carbon emissions, and the potential for sharing good practice around energy efficiency/local power generation;
 - (b) Integrated concepts and solutions for housing and neighbourhood development;
 - (c) The role of culture and creative industries in boosting economic activity and opportunities for exchange of information and possibly of people involved in arts and culture, beyond that which already happens through Town Twinning;

and

- (d) The potential for exchange activity focusing on Science, technology and engineering. For example the annual student exchange to Siemens in Mulheim.

39. There was a summing up session exploring the next steps, working arrangements, use of video conferencing and a possible return visit in the north east in the Autumn.

Trading Standards

40. Trading Standards recently prosecuted Shane Shipton, trading as Darlington Driveways, for trading unfairly by falsely claiming he was a Marshalls approved contractor.

41. Trading Standards became aware that Mr Shipton was claiming on his Darlington Driveways website that he was a Marshalls approved contractor but checks with Marshalls showed this was not the case. Mr Shipton was found guilty of the offence in Magistrates Court on 25 March 2014. He was fined £80 fine and £100 costs.

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Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**