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**LEADER'S OVERVIEW**

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**Regional and Tees Valley Updates**

1. At the Tees Valley Leadership Board we agreed the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan and the Local Growth Fund bid to Government. These include strong and transformational projects in Darlington which are described in Councillor McEwan's Portfolio report for Economic and Regeneration. The plan and bids included both a strong portfolio of transformational projects for Darlington and the Tees Valley as a whole. The outcome of the bids is anticipated in July 2014.
2. I continue to attend Durham Tees Valley Airport Board meetings, as the Council's nominee. Amongst other things we have considered the Airport's proposed Masterplan and the response to consultation on that, and marketing opportunities for services from and business development at the Airport.
3. On 11 April I attended an Association of North East Councils (ANEC) event with three of the shortlisted bidders, for the East Coast Main Line (ECML) scheme, the event highlighted the importance of the ECML to the economic growth of the North East and informed the bidders of the aspirations, priorities and issues for the ECML over the new franchise period. Conversations with each of the shortlisted bid Directors and with Department for Transport Civil Servants in the franchise competition team, have highlighted that owing to a more rigorous application of the Franchise Process Letting Agreement (FPLA), bidders will not be able to talk in any detail about what is likely or anticipated to feature in their final bids. Shortlisted bidders were, however, very keen to meet and engage on priorities for the North East in relation to the Franchise.

**General Updates**

4. I attended the East Coast Mainline Authorities (ECMA) Consortium Meeting on 21 March. ECMA have commissioned a Business Case for investment in the East Coast Mainline, which demonstrates the strong economic benefits that would arise from such investment. This Business Case is being discussed with DfT and Network Rail, for their investment planning, and given to the ECML franchise bidders. This will help make the case for services to Darlington, for Bank Top station, and for investment in other parts of the ECML which will benefit services to Darlington and Tees Valley.
5. The Best of Darlington Awards were held recently, where Darlington's unsung heroes had their achievements honoured. Boxing Coach, Lol Degnan, was awarded the Citizen of the Year, for his 60 years of dedication to teaching the art of boxing in the ring and the setting up of the Darlington Amateur Boxing Club 32 years ago. Danny Stevens was awarded Young Citizen of the Year. Danny, has

spent much of his teenage years volunteering and helping others. Recently Danny raised over £3,000 for charity by shaving off his shoulder length hair. A special award was presented to Councillor Nutt, for his work to maintain the Town's links with Europe, which last year reached their 60<sup>th</sup> year. Other award winners included business owners Alex and Samantha Blackham, for their contribution to the community; Red Cross volunteer Margaret Grey, who was named volunteer of the year; and world boxing champion Stuart Hall, who took home the prize for performance in sport.

6. More than 50 soldiers from the 50th (Northern) Signal Squadron, 32 Regiment, exercised their Freedom in Darlington Town Centre on 26 April, to mark the renewal of the ceremonial honour given to the Regiment in the Borough, which I was pleased to attend. The Royal Signals (Northern) Band performed in Joseph Pease Place, before parading through the Town, on their way to the Market Place, where the Freedom of the Borough Ceremony took place. The Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee Record Book, which contains much of the history of the town, together with the signatures of Royalty and other dignitaries who have visited the Borough, was signed at the end of the ceremony. The ceremony was well attended by the residents of the Borough.
7. Buzz TV - I am taking part in a short monthly videos to talk about local and Council issues that affect the Town. This will be known as 'Bill Buzz'.
8. I continue to engage with businesses on a one to one basis, giving them an opportunity to discuss any pressing matters where the Council may be able to offer assistance. I recently visited Aldi, together with a member of the Tees Valley Unlimited Leadership Board, to explore what can be done locally, and in the wider region, for a retailer with such rapid expansion prospects built on proven success. I was also pleased to visit Cummins and meet its Chief Executive Officer, Tom Linebarger, over from HQ. Tom was impressed by the strength of relationship the Council has with the company, and I impressed on him our commitment to continue that.
9. I was very proud to attend the unveiling of John Williams Boulevard, to honour John's contribution as Council Leader for 20 years.

### **Darlington Partnership**

10. I attended the March meeting of Darlington Partnership Board which focused on what its Action Priority should be for 2014/15. The Partnership Board agreed in September 2011 that, in addition to oversight of the delivery of 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed', it would focus on only a limited number of action priorities, the aim being to instigate action which visibly addressed issues facing Darlington. The criteria applied are:
  - (a) is the issue significant;
  - (b) would addressing it rely on the contributions of each sector, private, public, voluntary and community; and
  - (c) could a measurable impact be made in the short term (12 months).

11. The Partnership has been increasingly successful in establishing initiatives which address the priorities it has identified (e.g. Foundation for Jobs, Good Friends). Hearing the concerns of a number of Board members it has been agreed that Mental Health will be the Action Priority for this year. In particular raising awareness of mental wellbeing amongst employers and encouraging them to be mindful employers will be the focus. I have agreed to chair the steering group which will be developing action on this priority.

## Cabinet

12. Following the successful completion by the Council, and its partners, of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ), of the tendering process to operate the Durham Tees Valley Probation Services company, Cabinet at its meeting held 1 April 2014, agreed to make available £1m of Council Reserves to lend to the Achieving Real Change in the Community (ARCC) Community Interest Company (CIC), should they be successful tenderer to run the probation service.

## Policing and Community Safety

13. **Comparison with Ministry of Justice Pilot Areas** – On 20 March this year, the Ministry of Justice published an evaluation of the Neighbourhood Restorative Justice pilot areas 16 months on. Darlington was not included in those statistics, as we were not part of the official pilot, but the figures clearly demonstrate the scheme's success so far, equalling or surpassing the MoJ's top-performing schemes in every area – a testament to the excellent partnerships in Darlington, and our commitment to using evidence-based community-led approaches to meet the needs of victims, and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

	<b>National Average</b> (after 16 months)	<b>Top Performing 40%</b> (after 16 months)	<b>Darlington NR</b> (5 months since launch)
Referrals per month (average)	1.66	3.125	4.8 (3x national average)
Restorative meetings per year (average)	7.5	15	6 meetings have already taken place, putting us on track to match or exceed top-performing schemes

Figures derived from '[Process Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Justice Panels](#)', Ministry of Justice, 20 March 2014)

14. **Hate Crime** – Work is underway to sign up the first Safe Places for victims of hate crime. The initiative is being introduced in phases and it is expected that the first phase will be complete early in June and will be unveiled at an event held by the

Police and Crime Commissioner.

### **Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)**

15. The Recovery Centre (CAIR – Community Abstinence In Recovery) is now up and running, offering many additional opportunities for those individuals who have come through the Recovery Treatment System at The Gate and achieved abstinence. The CAIR members held a social evening on 11 April from 5 to 8 pm at the centre on Victoria Road, to an opportunity to friends and family to share their experience of the centre.
16. The Digital Project, using technology to keep in touch with, and support, service users in the adult substance misuse service is well underway, with progress being independently evaluated.
17. Reviews of all DAAT commissioned services are now established and will be ongoing throughout 2014/15, aiming to develop the most efficient and high quality service models going forward.
18. Key pieces of research have begun to inform future needs assessments and the review processes outlined above. These will focus on profiling the changing trends in substance misuse and profiling the using population to better understand the local picture.

**Bill Dixon**  
**Leader**