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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.

**Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan**

2. Cabinet recently endorsed the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan that was submitted to Government on 31 March 2014. The Plan is a critical framework for delivering more jobs and more businesses across the Tees Valley and is reflective of the economic growth opportunities for Darlington, as expressed in Darlington's Economic Strategy.
3. The Plan was accompanied by a bid for £62M in capital funding through the Local Growth Fund for 2015/16 and 2016/17 for projects across the Tees Valley.
4. The Plan also outlined the Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) proposal to generate economic growth and new jobs in the Tees Valley.
5. Cabinet also endorsed the Local Growth Fund bids for 2015/16 that were submitted to the Tees Valley LEP to advance priority economic development projects in the Tees Valley and which were also submitted to Government on 31 March 2014.
6. The Government response on the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan and its Local Growth Fund application is due in July 2014.

**City Deal**

7. Greg Clark, Minister for Cities has formally signed-off Tees Valley's City Deal. This secures £12million allocated directly as a result of the City Deal itself and a further £22million worth of programmes announced during the City Deal negotiation process. City Deal gives greater control over our economic destiny by enhancing TVU's ability to attract private investment, boost skills and create jobs.
8. The Tees Valley City Deal has three areas of focus:
  - (a) providing the conditions to enable increased investment in the processing, chemicals and new green technology industries;
  - (b) taking industrial carbon capture and storage (CCS) forward for Tees Valley and the UK as a whole;
  - (c) creating new business and civic benefits from waste industrial heat

9. To deliver the Tees Valley City Deal, Tees Valley Unlimited and partners will:
  - (a) work with Government to expand and enhance the planning certainty for investors at three key sites (Billingham, North Tees and South Tees)
  - (b) complete feasibility works and identify the best option to take forward an industrial carbon capture and storage network
  - (c) complete technical studies to enable the development of two waste industrial heat networks
10. These activities are complemented by:
  - (a) the completion of a Low Carbon Action Plan
  - (b) Tees Valley to be designated as an area recognised for green technologies and UKTI to support this status
  - (c) An enhanced Tees Valley Business Support programme
  - (d) A Tees Valley skills and apprenticeship programme
  - (e) Development of an innovation and commercialisation hub joint venture.

### **Local Plan: Revised Draft New Housing Development Policy**

11. Cabinet agreed to a revised draft Local Plan policy on new housing development and for public and other consultation to be carried out on the revised draft policy.
12. The Policy had been prepared to address site specific and housing delivery issues that emerged as a result of consultations last summer and to incorporate measures that would help to ensure the policy is found sound and can be adopted by the Council in due course.
13. The revised draft Policy reflects the Council's desire to help accelerate new housing delivery to support its economic ambitions for the Borough and improve the wealth base of the Council.
14. Small adjustments have been made to the annual housing targets to meet the overall requirement for 5,800 new homes by 2026 and the revised draft Policy also includes two options for further housing delivery and the reservation of land for a new primary school and nursery in the Beaumont Hill/Harrowgate Hill area.

### **Local Plan Consultation**

15. As part of the development of the Council's Local Plan - Making and Growing Places document, a revised policy for potential housing has been drafted. It sets out where new housing should be built in Darlington up until 2026. The revisions have been made following public and other consultation responses to the original policy last Summer.
16. In April, Cabinet agreed that a six- week period of consultation should take place on the revised proposals. The consultation period ran from 23 May to 4 July 2014. A series of 'drop-in' sessions were held across the Borough to give members of the public the opportunity to speak to planning and housing officers and comment on the new proposals. Common themes raised during the consultation included the

greenfield/brownfield site debate, traffic generation, loss of open space, school places and implications for community services, impact on wildlife and ecology, flooding and the provision of Council/social housing.

17. All comments received from the consultation exercise will be considered in finalising the new housing policy MGP16. Once finalised, the housing and other policies in the Local Plan will be subject to Public Examination before final adoption by the Council in 2015.

### **Bid to the Affordable Homes Programme 2015-18**

18. The Council has submitted a bid to the Affordable Homes Programme to support the construction of 66 new affordable homes that will be made available for rent. The bid if successful will lever in up to £1.2m of funding from the Homes and Communities Agency. The proposed build programme would be over the period 2015-17.

### **Central Park – Residential**

19. Keepmoat Homes have completed the demolition of the former Council Depot site to facilitate the delivery of the first phase of residential development at Central Park. Show Homes are open with an official launch of the site scheduled for mid-late July 2014. Keepmoat Homes have confirmed that there are a number of reservations on site already and are targeting c45 sales (including the 20 affordable units) by April 2015.

### **Darlington Business Growth Hub**

20. Construction work for the £6.6m project is now well underway and the steel frame is growing skywards opposite Bank Top Station at Yarm Road. Willmott Dixon, as main contractor is two weeks ahead of schedule and looks to complete the building by mid-February 2015.
21. We have set up an Operator Management Group with the Homes and Community Agency and the operator North East BIC (Business and Innovation Centre) which will operate the 3,200 square metre office building. Some design changes have been agreed with the Council which will make the building more suitable for operational marketing and pre-letting of prime office space. Pre-letting and marketing will start in earnest late Summer 2014 which includes branding and potentially a new name for the building. It will also be involved with the Council's Business Engagement section and wider Central Park stakeholders of shaping innovative business services and vital networking facilities in Darlington.

### **National Biologics Manufacturing Centre (NBMC)**

22. All demolition works at Central Park to bring forward the Centre for Process Innovation (CPI) led development were completed in time by mid-May 2014. This enabled Interserve (CPI's main contractor) to start construction on site as planned on 22 May 2014.

23. The building programme of the NBMC is circa three months behind that of the Business Growth Hub and works are co-ordinated by the Council between the two major building sites.
24. Completion date for the government supported national commercialisation centre for biologics and pharmaceutical research is now scheduled for April 2015.

### **Town Centre Conference**

25. Following on from the Town Centre Conference held on 27 March, Distinct Darlington and the Council are working together to agree and start to implement key actions arising from the conference. For example these include actions to:
  - (a) Put in place a process for identifying and dealing with vacant units, to engage with owners, agents, and tenants to understand the reasons behind the vacancy and to work to ensure units are brought back into use;
  - (b) To review planning policy as part of Local Plan process to reflect potential for a more flexible approach to Town Centre planning;
  - (c) Implement a coordinated approach to marketing leisure and events in the Town Centre; and
  - (d) Develop and roll out use of a Town Centre smart phone/tablet 'app'.

### **Foundation for Jobs**

26. The new Foundation for Jobs (FFJ) website is now up and running at [www.foundationforjobs.co.uk](http://www.foundationforjobs.co.uk).
27. Recent FFJ activities include:
  - (a) A site visit to the new business hub construction site for pupils aged 14 to 16 from Beaumont Hill Academy, a number of whom could potentially progress to work in the construction industry. They were briefed on aspects of working in the industry and were able to see some of the construction in progress.
  - (b) An event for Women in Engineering Day, on 23 June where 15 female pupils from St Aidan's Academy took part in computer aided design tasks with a team from Cummins Engines.
  - (c) Two Darlington primary school teachers attended Primary Engineer training, to deliver engineering projects in class, at Nissan's Sunderland plant on 27 June.
  - (d) A teacher visit to the new C-State subsea training centre on 27 June, followed by a visit for pupils from Hummersknott School.
28. FFJ has been working on a new project for school age pupils with AMEC at Lingfield Point. A group from the Education Village are expected to be the first to take part in early July.

29. FFJ has placed a young woman with learning difficulties on a work experience placement with The Student Loans Company.
30. FFJ has been working with the fostering and adoption service on a new six-month graduate internship placement and is presently at the shortlisting stage after receiving more than 50 applications.
31. FFJ is working with Digital City and Teesside University to introduce (computer) Coding Clubs in Darlington secondary schools from September. Professionals with the ability to do coding are very much in demand in the workplace, particularly with video game firms, many of which are based in the Tees Valley and wider North East.

### **Tees Valley Jobs and Skills Investment Scheme**

32. Funded through Regional Growth Fund the investment scheme can contribute up to 50 per cent of the salary costs of a new or safeguarded post. As of 16 June, 64 jobs had been created and five safe-guarded in Darlington, the value of wage subsidy approved is £555,360. There are a further 19 applications in Darlington in the pipeline with a subsidy value of £318k.

### **Tees Valley Workforce Skills Programme**

33. The Tees Valley Workforce Skills Programme has engaged with 85 Darlington businesses. The programme will cover 100 per cent of the cost of training employees and can provide training across a wide range of sectors and skills.
34. Referrals have been made for 1191 individual employees to receive free workforce development training provision which is coordinated through an administrative team based in Hartlepool. To date 130 Darlington-based employees have been trained.

### **Land at Former Eastbourne School – Residential Development and Investment in Eastbourne Sports Complex**

35. Cabinet have approved the further development of land at the former Eastbourne School and agreed to utilise the receipt from sales of the land to invest in replacing and refurbishing the Eastbourne Sports Complex and associated facilities.
36. The expected receipt from the sale of the land is circa £1.6 m and this would generate approximately £200,000 per annum in council tax and new homes bonus for the Council when fully developed.

### **Planning for the Future of Railway Heritage in Darlington**

37. Cabinet have approved a proposal to develop and deliver a vision for the future of railway heritage in Darlington and to undertake a comprehensive public engagement and consultation process that will underpin this vision.

38. The Town Centre Fringe Masterplan, adopted by Council in April 2012, was underpinned by several technical reports including a Comprehensive Management Plan. The profile of the Masterplan has led to renewed interest in the railway heritage and regeneration of the area and the wider economic ambitions that the Council has for the Borough.
39. The heritage of innovation, skills, engineering and world firsts that Darlington has is seen as a key economic selling point, driver and attractor. There is also a need to ensure that the two hundredth anniversary of the world's first passenger train in 2025 is an economic success for the Town.
40. There is a significant opportunity for Darlington's railway heritage to be a catalyst for economic growth, and a number of development enquiries have been received in the surrounding area of Head of Steam Museum. These developments will contribute to the creation of an exciting destination that will develop the wider economy as a whole.

### **Zoo Licensing Fees**

41. Cabinet approved a method for the setting of a Zoo Licence Fee and the level of Fee to be charged following Notification of Intention to apply for a Zoo Licence from Walworth Castle Birds of Prey Centre.
42. Granting of a licence has a number of stages to complete which may take some time, however, when the Council is in receipt of a satisfactory veterinary report and in a position to grant a licence it will be issued within seven working days.
43. The Secretary of State issues model conditions for zoo licences, although additional conditions can be attached by the Council, and also undertakes periodic inspections.

### **Mobile Homes Licence Fee Policy**

44. Cabinet were informed of legislative changes to the Licensing of Caravan Sites and agreed to adopt a Fee Policy to allow the recovery of Council costs.
45. The fee will enable the Council to recover some of the costs associated with the implementation of statutory duties relating to 'relevant protected sites'.
46. The Mobile Homes Act 2013 introduced some important changes to park home site licensing which included the ability for Local Authorities to charge site owners a fee for applying for a site licence, amendment or transfers of existing licences, annual fees and for site owners depositing site rules with the Local Authority.

### **Middleton St George – Neighbourhood Area Designation**

47. The Localism Act 2011 allows neighbourhoods the opportunity to develop their own Neighbourhood Development Plans and Cabinet considered the designation of a Neighbourhood Area at Middleton St George.

48. The Parish of Middleton St George was consulted on a modification to the proposed Boundary and despite reservations agreed to the change.
49. Cabinet have therefore agreed the modified area as a Neighbourhood Area for the proposed Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan.

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