

LEADER'S OVERVIEW

Medium Term Corporate Financial Plan

1. Following the Budget Advisory Panels that were held earlier in the year, I along with my Cabinet colleagues and the Chief Officers Executive have been working on the next year's budget proposals. The initial proposals were considered by Cabinet in November and those proposals are currently being consulted upon.

General Updates

2. On the occasion of the 60 Anniversary of our Town Twinning with Mulheim an der Ruhr I was very pleased to be invited along with the Mayor to attend a Civic Visit to the town at the end of the September. Alongside celebration of strong community links, I had useful discussions on economic opportunities.
3. Dr Chris Dowle, head of the new national Biologics Manufacturing Centre in Darlington, addressed Teesside University's October's Business Exchange, which I attended. The independent industry advisory board chose Darlington as the national base, which is an exciting development for businesses in the town and the region as a whole. During the presentation Dr Dowle outlined how the centre could support companies of all sizes in the biologics market to develop, prove, demonstrate, scale up and ultimately commercialise new biologics process technologies.
4. Following the success of the Festival of Thrift, I met with John Orchard of Marchday, to discuss plans for the festival in 2014.
5. I was pleased to be invited to attend the eVOLution Excellence Awards which were held on 7 November 2013. The awards help celebrate and honour the work and achievements of individuals and organisations across Darlington.
6. In respect of my Business Engagement Programme I continue to visit businesses in the town. Most recently I met with the newly appointed Chief Executive of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) which has undergone significant changes since it was originally introduced as the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). I am confident the Disclosure and Barring Service has a long term future in Darlington. I also visited Cummins Engines, with Jenny Chapman MP and the Ada Burns, Chief Executive, where I met their Vice President.
7. Work has commenced on the office site that will accommodate around 350 DfE workers as they move from their existing offices at Mowden Hall, Darlington. As part of the development a series of stone walls have been uncovered by the team

from Archaeological Services, Durham University.

8. I was pleased to be invited to join the judging panel for the Star Radio Business Awards. In advance of the awards ceremony I attended a meeting where all the nominations were considered.

Cabinet

9. A report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 1 October 2013 on a multi-agency approach to the Government's proposals for privatising the majority of Probation Services in relation to adult offenders. A local consortium, consisting of councils, health, housing and voluntary sector partners to explore the possibility of bidding for the contract to provide the service in the Durham and Tees Valley area. Cabinet agreed to endorse the action to date and to continue to support the development of the proposed consortium bid.
10. Approval was given by Cabinet to the emerging draft submission for City Deal at its meeting held in October. City Deal provides a means by which the Tees Valley is able to influence the investment decisions of Government as well as acting as a lever to help secure monies from other funding pots. Specifically for Darlington this has the potential to further the town's own economic regeneration goals in line with the Darlington Economic Strategy. Following approval of the draft submission, I met with the Rt Hon Greg Clark, Minister of State, in London.

Darlington Partnership

11. I attended a meeting of the Darlington Partnership Board held on 11 September which focused on the emerging needs in Darlington and what the most appropriate partnership response would be to those needs. The Board recognised and endorsed the growing capability of the Partnership in fostering a community led solution.
12. I also attended the last Darlington Partnership Board meeting in November where we heard a presentation about the growing incidence of poverty in Darlington. The Board was told that there are almost 11,000 working age adults, 4,500 children aged 0-17 and 3,000 pensioners in Darlington living in households with a disposable income of less than £13,312 per annum who are therefore living below the 'poverty line', the agreed international measure used throughout the European Union.
13. The number of children and families in poverty is growing and the profile of poor families is changing. In 66 per cent of families in poverty at least one person works. The Board agreed to support access to advice, food banks and the credit union being made available in community settings. In recognition that quality employment is critical to people getting out of poverty, the Partnership will be looking at what employment support can be developed.

Regional and Tees Valley Updates

14. Becky Hatch from the Cabinet Office, who is currently leading on a review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's), visited Tees Valley Unlimited, as part of that review, to see how the Tees Valley LEP are preparing to take on their new responsibilities for local growth, and in particular the development of local Strategic Economic Plans. As part of the review, the Cabinet Office are visiting 10 LEPs and are very keen to visit and to talk to key players within the LEP and working with it and I was interviewed by Becky Hatch as one of the Local Authority stakeholders.
15. Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) and the five Tees Valley Boroughs are preparing a Single Economic Plan, setting out the plans for future economic growth in the area, which will form the bid for Local Growth Funds from Government. The bid will be made in 2014 for funding from 2015/16 onwards.
16. Negotiations are continuing between TVU and Government on the proposed City Deal.
17. I was invited to attend the 'Nissan in the North East: Ride and Drive' event which was held in Washington on 18 November 2013. The event, which was exclusively open to ANEC Members, gave the opportunity to experience one of the North East's greatest manufacturing success stories, meet senior members of the Nissan team, drive current and future Nissan cars and commercial vehicles (including those produced in Sunderland) and see their car production up close.
18. Balance, in conjunction with the Association of North East Councils held a conference on the 21 and 22 November 2013 which featured a number of international and national speakers. Following the decision not to introduce a minimum unit price and a national alcohol strategy, the event was organised by Balance to explore how the North East can mobilise to influence national policy while taking local evidence-based measures to reduce alcohol harm.

Policing and Community Safety

19. The Neighbourhood Resolution Scheme which uses restorative approaches with adults who have engaged in low level anti-social behaviour will be launched on 6 November 2013. Thirty-six volunteers have just completed training and are now ready to start taking referrals.
20. The Good Friends Scheme run by Age UK in conjunction with Durham Constabulary and Neighbourhood Watch was launched earlier this month. This scheme aims to recruit volunteers to help support older people living in their own home. Scheme providers aim to recruit 1000 volunteers in the first year.
21. The Domestic Abuse Strategy and Action Plan have been updated and are to be considered by cabinet in December.

22. Following a workshop run by the Community Safety Partnership in Darlington and the Police and Crime commissioner, a joint plan has been agreed for progressing this work across Darlington and Durham. A Steering group is to meet to progress this chaired by Chief Supt. Graham Hall.
23. One of the five priorities of Ron Hogg the Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham is anti-social behaviour (ASB). Since May, the ASB team have dealt with 181 case of ASB, 251 perpetrators of ASB, 44 families/individuals identified as requiring (and accepting) support from other agencies and a number of 'hot spots' were identified throughout the town. A number of initiatives were planned including the Mischief Week/Bonfire Operation Staysafes and a five week ASB course for a number of identified young people who were on the cusp of becoming involved in more serious ASB.

Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)

24. The DAAT and NECA have been successful in a bid to become part of a national pilot to maximise the use of technology, such as texting services, to increase retention, leading to more sustainable outcomes for service users.
25. The development of the Recovery Centre is going well with a formal launch now to take place in October/November.
26. A Project Steering Group is now in place to carry out a full review of the young people's service, SWITCH, to build on excellent performance to date and determine the nature of the service in the future.
27. The DAAT is also co-ordinating support for the national Alcohol Awareness Week and Dry January campaigns to encourage people to think and talk about their drinking habits.

Bill Dixon
Leader