

**LEADER'S OVERVIEW**

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**Rail Matters**

1. I have continued to place a major focus on making sure that Darlington is a well connected town and, key transport hub, by rail.
2. There are a number of strategic fora where I represent Darlington and the Tees Valley, namely, Rail North; Electrification Task Force; and East Coast Mainline Authorities Group.
3. This agenda is particularly active at present because of re-franchising (Northern, East Coast and TransPennine), planning for HS2, and planning for Network Rail investments.
4. As well as meetings of the fora above, I have held meetings with senior Civil Servants on our ambitions for investment in Bank Top, and faster more frequent Tees Valley services.
5. As a member of the East Coast Mainline Authorities (ECMA), I attended and spoke at the launch of the ECMA manifesto in Edinburgh and London on 15 and 17 July respectively. The manifesto sets out the potential for investment and the opportunity for growth along the East Coast Mainline.

**Town Centre Car Parking**

6. As part of an on-going focus on our Town Centre economy, I was delighted to see the start of work on the £30 million leisure complex. Together with the new Department for Education office block, this development will bring, and keep, shoppers and visitors, into town. However, I recognise the challenges for retailers and invited a number of town centre traders to meet with me to gather their ideas. Following that meeting I agreed to explore a number of the suggestions received to improve parking in Darlington and to report back to the traders once investigated.
7. A subsequent follow-up meeting with the traders was held on 3 September whereby a number of key actions were agreed. A separate report can be seen elsewhere on this agenda requesting approval to those proposed changes.-
8. The constructive dialogue is ongoing and other suggestions continue to be tabled and relate to street access, loading and parking, traffic flow and management. These issues will be explored with the traders over the next few months.

9. I have also had meetings with senior managers from Binns (House of Fraser) and Marks & Spencer.

### **General Updates**

10. I was the guest speaker at the MIND Annual General Meeting and I took the opportunity to highlight the challenges being faced by this Council, and other local authorities, in terms of social care over the next three years.

### **Cabinet**

11. Cabinet was informed of the revised requirements for the Better Care Fund (BCF) at its meeting on 2 September 2014. A draft copy of the BCF submission was considered and approved by Cabinet, and the Chief Executive was given delegated authority to approve the final submission, in consultation with myself, prior to it being forwarded to a special meeting of the Health and Well Being Board, for sign off. The revised scheme now includes a ring-fenced element of £1m that will be held to manage risk in the acute sector.

### **Darlington Partnership**

12. The revised One Darlington: Perfectly Placed strategy was ratified at the last Partnership Board meeting held on 9 July. The document is now available on the Council's website.
13. The Board received a video that has been designed to explain the ambition of the strategy. The video was warmly received and is available on the Darlington Partnership website at [www.darlington.org.uk](http://www.darlington.org.uk)
14. The Partnership's assembly was held on 24 September 2014 with the focus being on 'Children Getting the Best Start in Life'.

### **Policing and Community Safety**

15. The Police and Crime Commissioner (Ron Hogg) has a new Chief of Staff, Alan Reiss, who I was pleased to meet recently to discuss the priorities for Darlington.
16. The Neighbourhood Resolutions project continues to increase its number of referrals, having received 41 new referrals since May 2014. A new campaign to recruit the second round of volunteers for the project is underway and a volunteer training programme began this month.
17. Preparations for the introduction of the new Anti-Social Behaviour legislation on 20 October 2014 continue, with training being given to staff and two sessions of training for Members being delivered this month. The introduction of the Community Trigger and Community Remedy will be of particular interest to Members and will be discussed in more detail at the training sessions.

18. Two new developments to protect victims of domestic abuse have recently been put in place. One is the Domestic Violence Protection Order, which allows a Senior Police Officer to grant a temporary order to prevent a perpetrator from returning to the home for 48 hours during which time, if required, an application can be taken to court to extend this period to 28 days. The second development is the introduction of 'Claire's Law', which allows someone in a new relationship to make enquiries regarding their new partner to see if they have a history of domestic abuse. A third party can also instigate an enquiry but any resulting information will only be shared with the person in the relationship. Where an enquiry shows that there is a past history of domestic abuse, the Police will visit the woman and inform her of this and offer support to deal with the situation.
19. The last briefing mentioned a recent Police and Crime Commissioner event and the launch of a Safe Places Scheme for victims of hate crime. Since the launch, two people have used the scheme, which worked effectively in both cases. Although it is hoped that the need for people to use the Safe Places Scheme will be rare, it is good to know that the existing scheme has helped where it has been needed.

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

20. Members of the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee made a visit to the Recovery Centre to see the achievements made by members of the Community Abstinence In Recovery Group - former service users using the centre and associated activities to support others to maintain recovery post treatment.
21. This year's Healthy Behaviours Survey has drawn considerable interest across the Borough, with presentations of the findings to Health and Partnerships Scrutiny, the Children and Young People Collective and the Health and Wellbeing Board, with more planned. Headline findings show yet another year on year reductions in key elements of behaviour, including young people using drugs and/or drinking in the last week.
22. In 2013-14, the number of those in structured treatment for alcohol achieving a successful completion rose by 13 per cent from the 2011-12 figures. Service improvements also mean that non-opiates users and opiates users achieved successful completion rates similar to the national average. The DAAT and the treatment service are working together to profile problematic substance misusers.
23. The final 2012/13 figure for alcohol-related hospital admissions shows a 3 per cent decrease from 2011/12 and this Public Health Outcomes Framework indicator is currently rated green.
24. Recruitment of service users for participation in the D2Digital Engagement Project is continuing. Uptake has been slower than anticipated in both the pilot sites, although slightly higher in Darlington than the other area.
25. Despite staffing and capacity issues during 2013/14, resulting in reduced numbers into treatment, the SWITCH young people's substance misuse service maintained high quality standards of delivery, meeting targets for planned exits in the same

period.

26. The DAAT (Drugs and Alcohol Team) and substance misuse treatment services are working closely with colleagues across the Council and Durham Constabulary following the launch of Alcohol Related Intervention, Enforcement and Support (ARIES) earlier this month. This project, led by Durham Constabulary, employs a partnership approach to tackling underage drinking and associated anti-social behaviours.
27. The DAAT is in consultation with partners and key stakeholders to design a new treatment system. This new model will go out to procurement in the Autumn.

**Bill Dixon**  
**Leader**