
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

Regional and Tees Valley Updates

1. The Tees Valley Growth Deal was officially signed at an event which I attended on 20 November 2014. The Enterprise Zone site in Darlington will benefit from Local Growth Funding.
2. It continues to be extremely busy in relation to our efforts to protect and enhance strategic rail and road links for the Tees Valley. I have attended the Rail North Leaders Committee, full meeting and briefed Tees Valley MP's on our priorities. In the context of the debate on devolution and the creation of a body to be known as 'Transport for the North'. I continue to make representations on the need for the Tees Valley to have representation.
3. The five Tees Valley Councils are now taking reports through their Cabinets/Committees on the establishment of a Combined Authority. My experience of leading on strategic transport has reinforced the importance of positioning ourselves as a city region with strong governance, ready to assume more devolved powers.
4. The Association of North East Councils (ANEC) welcomed a delegation from the Ruhr Valley on 10 November. The purpose of the visit was to explore opportunities to develop new co-operative partnerships building upon the long standing town twinning arrangements between Mülheim an der Ruhr and Darlington, Essen and Sunderland; Gelsenkirchen and Newcastle; Oberhausen and Middlesbrough and Kreis Wesel and County Durham.
5. Areas explored for sharing learning and best practice, potential training programmes and joint bids for European funding include :-
 - (a) culture and creative industries/economies;
 - (b) sustainability, including energy efficiency;
 - (c) regeneration and neighbourhood development;
 - (d) skills/apprenticeships;
 - (e) land remediation; and
 - (f) business to business links.
6. On 11 November, 2014, delegates visited Darlington, taking part in a workshop looking at development taking place and planned at Central Park; training and skills provision for young people, including a presentation from a representative from Siemens and the work taking place across the North East to mitigate for and adapt to Climate change. The delegates also visited the Foundation for Jobs 'Bridge

building activity' for secondary school students taking place all week at Darlington College.

General Updates

7. I chaired the meeting of the Health and Well Being Board held on 14 October 2014, at which informative presentations were given by Aisla Rutter, Director of FRESH – Smoke Free North East on making smoking history in the North East and by Michael Banks, Deputy Chief Constable, Durham Constabulary on the Mental Health Crisis Concordat. A number of reports were also considered at the meeting including a report identifying issues relating to clinical quality and personal care for Darlington residents; Co-production; and a general update report on issues relevant to the Board.
8. I agreed to sit on the BBC Tees Hot Seat on 18 November 2014 and respond to questions raised by listeners.
9. Connected Recovery Art and Media presented a play 'Drac and the Rat' at the Forum Music Centre on 4 November 2014. The evening also included a Diploma achievement and award ceremony and celebration of recovery for service users and I agreed for one of the characters to be named after me. Money from the event was donated to the soup kitchen.
10. I attended a meeting with the Chief Executive and I convened to consider the implications of the report into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham. Senior representatives from the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, the Cabinet Portfolio holder and chair of the Children's and Young People Scrutiny Committee reviewed the key lessons, and our own practice, and I was pleased to note the offer of the Scrutiny Chair, Councillor Lister, to undertake a review of Darlington's current arrangements.

Business Engagement

11. I arranged for the Head of Carmel School to meet with representatives from two of the town's large engineering companies, Whessoe and Subsea, to encourage better partnerships in the Darlington Industry Initiative.
12. Following one of my Retail Visits, Marks and Spencers hosted a get together with a number of large retailers in the Town to listen to their concerns and to explore, with BID how we could boost footfall in the Town.
13. The Centre for Process Innovation (CPI) celebrated 10 years of innovation with an event entitled 'From Innovation to Commercialisation'. Policy makers focussed on UK and EU policies, strategies, achievements and future opportunities. Darlington is a proud receiver of new investments from CPI.

Cabinet

14. Following approval by Cabinet that this Council would partner with the Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group to secure the integration of the commissioning of care and services for local people through improved ways of working, a Memorandum of Understanding, was considered and approved, by Cabinet on 14 October 2014. The Memorandum of Understanding set out the clear principles for both organisations to enable them to work successfully together. The aim of the partnership is to work together to improve the commissioning and delivery of health and Social Care Services.

Darlington Partnership

15. At its meeting in March 2014 the Board agreed that its Action Priority for 2014/15 should be mental health. In particular, the focus of its action would be to encourage Darlington employers to support their employees mental wellbeing. I agreed to chair the steering group that would develop the initiative. There has been significant engagement and consultation with local employers which has been vital to the design of the emerging initiative.
16. Working through Darlington Cares, a network of 'buddy support' will be developed where companies and organisations with better resourced and more experienced mental wellbeing support, mentor smaller companies to develop their own services for their staff. The initiative will be embedded into Darlington Cares, with Cares' members offering buddying as part of their corporate social responsibility contribution. Darlington Cares will act as the vehicle through which organisations find each other to 'buddy up' through hosting events and targeted marketing.
17. The initiative will be facilitated and supported by a discrete area of the Darlington Cares website which would have access restricted to participating companies. The site will provide:
 - (a) access to approved resources;
 - (b) links to other sites;
 - (c) access to expert advisors; and
 - (d) a brokerage page where those seeking help can find buddies offering support
18. Access to the site will be given to those companies participating after their first 'buddying' session. This will also trigger the awarding of a mark of recognition. The web pages are currently being designed and material is being compiled to populate it. Once a draft is ready it will be reviewed by the Darlington Cares Board.
19. A number of 'buddying' ups are occurring organically which will be monitored to inform how the initiative develops. A 'find a buddy' is planned and it is proposed that a launch event will be held in the New Year once the initiative is embedded and has some positive outcomes to report.

Policing and Community Safety

20. An event was held on 3 October 2014 to demonstrate the work carried out in County Durham and Darlington by Police, partners and members of the local community facilitated by Mutual Gain. In Darlington, this focussed on Northgate, where a number of events involving the local community have been held in the last six months and have been very well attended and well received.
21. The community has put forward its thoughts on how to improve the area and work together to help further reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. There are 19 members of the community who have volunteered to help take these projects forward and it is hoped that more residents will become involved as the projects start to evolve. Darlington Borough Council is committed to playing its part in helping the projects to succeed.
22. The specification for domestic abuse support services went live on the portal during October 2014 and it is expected that the new provider/s will be selected in December 2014, with a view to the services starting in April 2015.
23. The transformation of the Probation Service continues and we await the outcome of the commissioning process to select the organisation that will run the Community Rehabilitation Company. In the meantime, some initial meetings are taking place to put together a joint group to take forward a strategy for reducing offending and re-offending across County Durham and Darlington.
24. The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 sets out new tools and powers available to Council's and Police to help tackle anti-social behaviour. These powers came into effect on 20 October 2014. New Powers include: - Civil Injunctions (which replace the well-known 'ASBO'), Public Space Protection Orders, Community Protection Notices, Criminal Behaviour Orders, Police Dispersal Powers and Closure of Premises powers.
25. The right response will depend on a range of factors, but most importantly, on the needs of the victim and the impact the behaviour is having on their lives. Solutions need to be jointly developed by the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Housing, NHS and Police, each bringing their own experience and expertise to work together with communities and victims. Frontline professionals must be free to use their judgment rather than following a prescribed 'one size fits all' approach.

Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)

26. Darlington Borough Council received the award of Alcohol Concern's Dry January Council of the Year, following a successful campaign, including a "Driday" night out pub crawl proposed by Pubwatch, which received positive press coverage.
27. There was also useful awareness raising through press and television coverage of the International Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day event in Darlington Market Square on 9 September 2014. FASD is a lifelong disability that has no cure but it is preventable. It is a spectrum of behavioural, emotional, physical and neurological issues that are caused by the consumption of alcohol on

a developing foetus during pregnancy and is thought to affect at least one per cent of babies.

28. The new treatment system model, developed in consultation with partners and key stakeholders, is now out for procurement. It is anticipated that the successful provider will be announced in December 2014.
29. The 2014 Healthy Behaviours Survey is now underway in a number of schools across the Borough; taking a social norms approach to addressing smoking, drugs and alcohol, sexual behaviour, diet and exercise. Findings will be available in the New Year.

Bill Dixon
Leader