ITEM NO.6

DARLINGTON PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update on the progress of Darlington Partnership.

Summary

- 2. Darlington Partnership continues to champion the sustainable community strategy One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. In furthering the strategies objectives it has ensured that the projects it has established have continued to deliver effectively. In addition the Partnership is taking forward work in other areas important to the borough where collaboration is essential.
- 3. The Partnership is also delivering initiatives which promote and celebrate Darlington.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that Members receive this report for information.

Seth Pearson Partnership Director

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S17 Crime and Disorder	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Health and Well Being
Carbon Impact	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Caron Impact
Diversity	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Diversity
Wards Affected	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on specific Wards
Groups Affected	This report is for information and will have neither a positive or negative impact on Groups
Budget and Policy Framework	This report outlines how the Council discharges the core function outlined in its Corporate Plan to "Support strong partnerships to set a vision and direction for the Borough"
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report outlines the primary means by which the Council engages with partners to deliver One Darlington : Perfectly Placed
Efficiency	The report highlights how other public agencies and other sectors are engaged to support the Council in addressing the needs of the residents of Darlington through agreed priorities.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

One Darlington: Perfectly Placed

- 5. Darlington Partnership continues to champion the sustainable community strategy One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. During 2017 -18 it received reports on the outcomes and discussed emerging issues. In recent years Darlington Partnership has widened its role from strategic oversight to identifying priorities and initiating a range of collaborative actions.
- 6. A presentation in May from the chair of the Community Safety Partnership identified domestic violence as a serious concern. In response the Partnership, in collaboration with the office of the Police, Crime and Victim's Commissioner launched a campaign raising awareness with local employers, providing information on how they could support any of their employees who were victims of Domestic Violence.
- 7. Darlington Partnership has taken an active role in delivering on the ambition of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed of Building Strong Communities. It has established a number of initiatives aimed at improving community resilience (described below). In addition it has supported the voluntary sector by holding a Volunteer Fair which has facilitated the recruitment of additional volunteers.

Initiatives:

Good Friends

- 8. The initiative involves a network of Good Friends keeping a watchful eye on their older and vulnerable neighbours, providing support and friendship and assisting them with a range of issues which if left unaddressed could compromise their ability to live safely and well independently. They make brief contact to check up on vulnerable people who live nearby but will escalate the contact during known difficult times e.g. cold weather or when alerted to a specific problem.
- 9. The initiative improves elderly and vulnerable people's quality of life whilst reducing demand on public service and avoiding cost.
- 10. The Good Friends initiative which is managed by Age UK Darlington won an award in March 2015 at the Local Government Chronicle Awards.
- 11. During the recent cold weather Good Friends were very active ensuring people they are supporting were well and had enough provisions.
- 12. Discussions are underway between Council officers and The CCG regarding unmet demand for befriending and volunteer driving services. It could be that Good Friends plays a role in this.

Darlington Cares

- 13. Darlington Cares in an initiative established through Darlington Partnership which provides a means for Darlington's businesses to support the local community predominantly through employer supported volunteering.
- 14. It was launched in October 2012, by 5 local employers and now has a membership of 26. The initiative is self-funding with members contributing to its costs.
- 15. It focuses on the following objectives:
 - (a) Children with the best start in life.
 - (b) More people caring for our environment.
 - (c) Enough support for people when needed.
- 16. The initiatives delivers range of programmes from a 'busy readers' scheme supporting school children with their literacy skills, supporting the food bank and a wide range of environmental works.
- 17. In October 2017 Darlington Cares reformed as it made plans for growth. The Partnership Director has also taken on responsibility of Director of Darlington Cares, a Programme Officer has been appointed and PR consultants have been appointed under contract. The new arrangements have been trialled for 6 months and now are confirmed. The mission the board has set is to significantly grow the volume of employer supported volunteering, significantly raise public awareness and for Darlington Cares to be recognised as a valuable asset for businesses.
- 18. During 2017 Darlington Cares delivered 4,800 hours of volunteering involving 978 volunteers across 99 projects that it had organised. It has set a target of 5,500 hours of volunteering for 2018 which the Board believes it will comfortably exceed.
- 19. There are new projects being developed to add the existing programmes
 - (a) Pick Pie and a Pint this has proved extremely popular. Every month a litter pick is held in the town centre followed by a pie and a pint (or soft drink and something healthy) in a local pub paid for by private sector sponsors. Typically each event is attracting 50 or so volunteers.
 - (b) The great Parks Auction Darlington Cares member companies are bidding hundreds of hours of volunteering to secure their support for four of Darlington's parks. They will then work with the respective 'friends of' group to develop a schedule of work. At the end of the summer the parks will be judged by a horticulturalist to determine which has been most improved.
 - (c) The Big Community Challenge Darlington Cares has taken on a major project renovating the now overgrown pond and nature garden of St Mary's school Cockerton. From Thursday 26th April a large crowd of volunteers will work on the site and when complete the event will culminate in a community picnic on the Saturday.

Festival of Ingenuity

- 20. The Festival of Ingenuity will be held on 13th & 14th July this year. The format will be similar to previous years with activities accessible to schools on the Friday whilst the Saturday includes activities and entertainment for families.
- 21. There will be a marquee on the town square showcasing Darlington's ingenious businesses and a family fun area on the Feetham's Podium level. The riverside park next to Bishopsgate House will have live music which will go on into early evening.

Best of Darlington

- 22. This year's Best of Darlington Awards ceremony will be held on May 18th. At the time of writing the report there have been over 150 nominations submitted.
- 23. As last year the ceremony will be held in the Dolphin Centre

Partnership Assemblies

- 24. The Partnership Board agreed at its meeting in March that an Assembly would be held in the autumn focusing on the impact of welfare reforms.
- 25. The Welfare Reform Act of 2012 introduced a number of changes to the social security system.
- 26. With other elements of the legislation in place, Universal Credit will be fully rolled out Darlington in June this year. (The Partnership is facilitating an event in May for agencies who work with those potentially affected).
- 27. Welfare reform affects different types of households in very different ways. Low income households have been impacted with certain cohorts, such as families with children and households containing a person with a disability, particularly affected. Working households in receipt of tax credits are particularly likely to be highly affected by welfare reform, largely due to the cuts to work allowances. Private tenants are heavily affected by welfare reform in terms of real income loss.
- 28. The assembly will aim to:
 - (a) To collectively gain a clear understanding how households in Darlington have been affected.
 - (b) Consider the measures that can be put in place by local services to mitigate against the negative impacts of Welfare Reform.
 - (c) This could include: Access to IT, Money Advice, Employment advice, Employability support, Financial Capability support, Affordable Credit
 - (d) Ensure that agencies are working effectively together.

Volunteer Fair

- 29. Following success of the first Volunteer Fair held in 2017 another Fair was held on Thursday 1st February 2018.
- 30. CDCF kindly sponsored the event which was held in the Dolphin Centre Sports Hall.
- 31. The event was run in collaboration with Darlington Cares providing opportunity for joint promotion and to raise awareness and engagement with Voluntary Organisations.
- 32. Anecdotal feedback from the voluntary and community organisations who had stall there was positive. A survey is being carried out which will give a more accurate picture.