
OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Economy and Regeneration Portfolio.

Acquisition and Disposal of Land at Faverdale East Business Park

2. In order to facilitate the expansion of an established Darlington-based company, enhance the environmental, social and economic well-being of the Borough and to support the implementation of Darlington's Economic Regeneration Strategy, Cabinet approved the acquisition and disposal of land on Faverdale East Business Park.
3. Darlington has aspirations to support the development of engineering businesses within the Borough and this proposal forms part of Darlington's Economic Strategy.
4. The Council can play a key role in creating the right environment through assisting companies to identify and secure suitable sites and premises and this expansion will not only support the creation of new jobs, it will demonstrate Darlington's suitability and strengths in this key sector.
5. It will also facilitate the retention and creation of new skilled jobs in a sector which is significant not just at Local Enterprise Partnership area level but also nationally, contributing to private sector led economic growth.

Business Engagement

6. Since the start of the year the business engagement team has been using a customer relationship management tool, Tracktivity. Business engagement, as recorded through the Tractivity system, used by the team since January 2015 include:
 - (a) 145 external searches on the Property search facility on our website, carried out by 43 individuals some of which are not currently based in Darlington or the borough;
 - (b) 17 engagements directly linked to Inward Investment enquiries;
 - (c) the team is currently working on 17 hot prospects which are classified as the projects which have the potential to have a significant impact on jobs and economic growth in the borough;

- (d) there have been 59 businesses enquiries this year regarding employment opportunities and/or apprenticeships with potential to create 248 jobs with 89 of those vacancies now being filled;
- (e) the pop up shop scheme in Town Hall Civic Reception has been running since the end of May and to date has engaged directly with 30 local businesses and confirmed slots with 16 others;
- (f) Virgin East Coast Trains has chosen Bank Top Station as the location to launch a pilot Pop Up Shop scheme. Darlington based retailers set up shop in the Station on 27 and 28 August and 3 and 4 September;
- (g) Redhall Employability project has, to date, worked with 60 unemployed people. Two people have gone into full-time education, ten have secured jobs, four have started traineeships and another four have gained apprenticeships;
- (h) Ingenious Darlington presentations were attended by 40 key Darlington-based businesses. The objective being that businesses, organisations and residents identify with the brand and use it in their own innovative way, almost as subliminal messaging. Success will be when there is a critical mass of people and organisations using the idea and images of 'Darlington a most ingenious Town' in how they speak, look and do. Organisations who have already signed up to support the brand include Bussey and Armstrong, Rockcliffe Hall, Lingfield Point, Teesside University, Mercure Hotel and Darlington Business Club; and
- (i) Since January, TEDCO start up support for the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) programme in Darlington has had 42 client starts, three verified and 14 awaiting sign off. NEA is available to unemployed people on Job Seekers Allowance.

Invest in Darlington website

7. A dedicated new website 'Invest in Darlington' went live this month. The site which is very much aimed at attracting new business investment provides a commercially focused shop window promoting Darlington. It includes information on Darlington tailored to our key employment growth sectors, recent investment case studies, a property search facility and a 'how we can help' section with guidance on funding and recruitment support, planning, industry networking and the support available from our Local Enterprise Partnership. To visit the website go to :
www.investindarlington.co.uk

Objectively Assessed Housing Needs

8. Consultants were commissioned in early April to undertake the Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (known as the OAN). Their work is nearing completion and will be reported to Members in the near future. The OAN is needed to allow the Council to establish if it has a five year housing land supply, which in turn is needed if the Council wants to refuse planning applications for new housing that are contrary to its adopted development plan. The up-to-date OAN also needs to

be reflected in emerging development plan policies for housing, such as through new housing allocations in the Making and Growing Places Development Plan Document, if the Council wants to reduce the risk of its emerging development plan policies being found unsound.

9. The OAN is part of a wider piece of work to update the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which will provide up to date information about the need for specific sizes and types of dwellings.

Blackwell Consultation

10. In 2013, the Council consulted Local Plan stakeholders and residents on proposed residential allocations in the Borough, including four sites (He1-He4) in the Blackwell area for low density, executive housing. Since then, several studies have been undertaken in Blackwell including:

- (a) Topographical Survey;
- (b) Tree Survey;
- (c) Wildlife Survey;
- (d) Utilities Survey;
- (e) Hydrology and Drainage Survey; and
- (f) Highways and Access Study

11. These surveys, together with other information, formed the basis for a further consultation on revised proposals which extended the range of housing to include apartments (some specifically for elderly people) and some semi-detached houses. The six-week consultation was held from 17 July to 28 August 2015. A consultation event was held at the Blackwell Grange Hotel on 22 July which was well-attended by local residents. As at 12 August, 64 representations have been received, the vast majority from local residents.
12. A Special Place Scrutiny Committee meeting, preceded by a site visit on 8 September, was arranged for 17 September to consider the consultation responses.
13. A report containing the consultation responses, together with Officer comments and recommendations will be considered by Cabinet on 6 October 2015. This report will seek approval for the number, locations and types of dwellings to be included in the Making and Growing Places Development Plan Document.

Arts Centre Planning Applications

14. The Arts Centre Planning Applications have now been approved and BAT surveys have been completed and are satisfactory from a planning point of view. An appropriate condition has been added to both planning permissions and the applicants informed.

National Biologics Manufacturing Centre

15. The National Biologics Manufacturing Centre (NBMC) will be officially opened on 30 September. This is a significant milestone in not only the development of Central Park but also a step change in the competitive position in the Tees Valley.

Councillor Chris McEwan
Economy and Regeneration Portfolio