

**LEADER'S OVERVIEW**

---

**Regional and Tees Valley Updates**

1. The Tees Valley has submitted to the Government a proposal for devolution of powers and resources that can drive economic growth. Discussions with Officials and Ministers are progressing well, and I hope very much that Government is able match the scale of our ambition in its response.
2. Hitachi officially opened its facilities in Newton Aycliffe on 3 September. This will provide a massive boost in the jobs market for the North East and will be supported by the Council's business engagement team. I will be meeting His Excellency Keiichi Hayashi, Japan's Ambassador to the UK along with the Chief Executive on 15 October to further improve links with a key trading partner.
3. Work is continuing to establish the Combines Authority (CA) for the Tees Valley. It is important to note that the CA, while related to a possible devolution deal, will progress regardless of whether or when we conclude negotiations on devolution. The CA will give the Tees Valley a model of streamlined governance that in itself will assist growth. We are working with DCLG on a timetable that would see the CA established in April 2016. The next phase will be consultation undertaken by the Government on our governance model.
4. I am continuing to press Government on some key transport investments required to support growth in Darlington and the Tees Valley, work on the Bank Top Masterplan is progressing well and the next few months is crucial to secure inclusion in the next phase of Network Rail investment.

**General Updates**

5. Like the members I was deeply concerned and disappointed to see the Ofsted Inspection report into our Children's Services. Concerned because within the limited resources we have we will always want to be the best we can be, and disappointed because judgement did not reflect the many areas of strength within our service, with the Cabinet Member, Chief Executive and Senior Officers I am actively reviewing the immediate and next steps to develop a robust improvement plan. Ofsted did, however, grade the Adoption Performance and Experiences and Progress of Care Leavers as "Good".
6. On 12 August I was privileged to welcome young people from Darlington Schools to the launch of 'Make your Mark', hosted by Darlington's Youth Parliament. During the last Autumn term over 875,000 secondary school pupils took part in a national ballot, 'Make your Mark'. This ballot decides what Members of the UK Youth Parliament (MYP's) should debate and vote on to be their campaign for the

year ahead. MYP's have previously debated in the House of Commons Chamber in mid-November.

7. I have taken up the council's position as Distinct Darlington Board Member (BID). I hope my input will help secure business expansion within the retail sector as well as development of non-retail opportunities. The Town has benefitted from increased footfall due to summer activities such as Darlington by the Sea.

### **Darlington Partnership**

8. I attended the last Darlington Partnership Board meeting on 8 July 2015. With the Council as the co-ordinating partner, the Partnership has agreed to publish a new magazine which will be called 'One Darlington'. The magazine will be delivered by-monthly to every home and business in Darlington. In a departure from 'Darlington Together', other public sector bodies, the voluntary sector and the private sector as represented by Darlington Cares will be providing editorial and contributing to the cost. As part of the magazine launch, there will be an accompanying website and it was proposed to the Board that Darlington Partnership and its social media presence be rebranded as 'One Darlington' to sit in line with this.
9. A presentation on the 'Ingenious Darlington' branding, which has been developed by local businesses was also warmly received by the Board. Board Members agreed to explore how they could incorporate the design into their marketing and promotional material.

### **Policing and Community Safety**

10. Durham Constabulary, in collaboration with Northumbria and Cleveland Police, has been successful in securing funding for two years, to pilot an innovative team to tackle and reduce domestic abuse. The team will not manage a caseload but will ensure that existing practitioners have support and knowledge to provide an effective response. The team will focus on standard and medium risk cases rather than high risk, as there are already mechanisms in place to deal with high risk incidents. A separate team is also being set up to carry out a similar role in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation.
11. The 'Checkpoint' initiative is now fully implemented in Darlington and County Durham. This initiative aims to work with offenders committing certain types of crime, who have committed three or less offences, and to divert them from the Criminal Justice System by addressing their support needs and reasons behind their offending behaviour. To date, there have been 148 referrals to the programme and there are 127 active cases. Offenders on the scheme have been involved in 140 hours of community volunteering.
12. The desistance model of working with offenders, which is being implemented by the CRC, is proving very successful. Funding has been secured from a number of sources and a Community Justice/Social Action Co-ordinator post is being recruited to develop the model. Two initiatives that are currently being developed working with offenders is a 'Peace Garden', which is currently in the process of applying for planning permission. The second is a lunch club, which operates from

the Fire Station. One club has been held to date with elderly people and was very successful. Members of the Fire Service also attended this. Other lunch clubs are being planned for the future, possibly working with the Alzheimer's Society and DAD. A Social Action Project is also being planned with Redhall Community Centre.

13. The Community Safety Plan 2015-20 has now been approved by Council and sets out the Community Safety Partnership's priorities for the next five years. Priorities are reducing offending and re-offending, tackling the harmful effects of substance misuse, vulnerability, anti-social behaviour and families with multiple problems.

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

14. The Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco DAAT Board met on 2 September 2015. The Board now incorporates what was the Tobacco Control Alliance, aligning the two agendas. A presentation was well received from Trading Standards around local progress and successes in tackling illicit tobacco. The Board was also updated on work to develop the local Substance Use Strategy and the implementation of the Recovery and Wellbeing Service.
15. The Substance Use Strategy will cover the three elements of Prevention, Control and Recovery Treatment, setting indicators for adults and young people and across drugs, alcohol and tobacco under each strand. A draft Needs Assessment Summary was opened up for partner and stakeholder consultation via Survey Monkey during August. Findings will be incorporated into the draft strategy which will then also go out for wider consultation.
16. The implementation of the North East Counselling and Addictions Services (NECA) Recovery and Wellbeing Service continues to progress well. Current pathways work includes work with NHS England and prison providers on prison discharge systems, work with colleagues in adult Social Care on the Residential Rehabilitation pathways, work with partners on Dual Diagnosis pathways and work with criminal justice partners on various pathways for different levels of offending, including the Checkpoint Programme Pilot for low to mid-level offenders and Integrated Offender Management, for prolific and higher risk offenders.
17. The Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS/Legal Highs) Stakeholder Group goes from strength to strength, with over 18 organisations and 30 members actively involved in developing and progressing a local action plan to tackle associated harms. This includes a sub group looking at prevention and awareness-raising and another group leading on rolling out a briefing in education settings.

18. The DAAT is also involved in a regional commissioners group, working with Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys (TEWV) NHS Foundation Trust on their Smoke-free Project, which aims to have all the mental health Trust sites smoke-free for patients, staff and visitors by No Smoking Day in March 2016.

**Bill Dixon**  
**Leader**