
OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio.

Town Centre Parking – Multi Storey Car Park

2. The Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP) opened in January 2016.
3. There are also works proposed to kerb lines and crossing points on Beaumont Street to improve pedestrian facilities between the MSCP and the town as well as the route to the new cinema.
4. The existing Beaumont Street East car park which fronts onto Feethams will be closed by the end of February 2016. The MSCP has been designed to accommodate the cars displaced from this car park.

Stonebridge Strengthening Works

5. The first phase of the refurbishment was completed on time at the start of December 2015. The bridge was reopened to two way traffic on the run up to Christmas. The second phase commenced on site in January 2016 and will last until March 2016. The traffic management will again restrict access into the town via the bridge, but will permit buses to exit, as was the case with phase 1.
6. The third phase of the scheme which involves painting and other relatively minor works will commence in the summer 2016 and will not require any carriageway closures.

Central Park South Junction and Spine Road

7. A scheme to introduce a signal controlled junction at the southern access into Central Park is nearing completion. The access will serve a number of commercial properties including Business Central and the National Biologics Centre, which have recently been constructed.
8. A second phase of the Spine Road is due to commence on site in early spring 2016. This will involve the construction of approximately 500m of access road to serve development sites.

Highway Maintenance Schemes

9. Recently completed schemes:

- (a) Springfield Road – Footway Refurbishment
- (b) Baxby Terrace - Footway Refurbishment
- (c) A68 duals - A1M to Swanhouse Roundabout - Carriageway resurfacing
- (d) Stanhope Road/Abbey Rd/Duke Street Roundabout - Carriageway resurfacing

10. Ongoing scheme:

- (a) Footway Micro Asphalt Contract 2015 – 28 Sites

11. Schemes due to commence:

- (a) Coombe Drive – speed cushion refurbishment
- (b) Estoril Road – Carriageway Reconstruction

North East Highways Alliance – Framework for Highways Surfacing

12. The North East Highways Authorities are working collaboratively on a number of joint initiatives to improve efficiency and performance as part of the North East Highways Alliance. As part of this collaborative working Darlington has lead a significant procurement exercise to develop a Framework for Highways Surfacing. This framework will be utilised throughout the North East for surfacing works. The estimated annual value of the contract is £24.35 million per year across the North East Authorities.

13. The framework improves efficiency across the region reducing the need to undertake numerous procurements. The contract is now in place for 24 months commencing 1st December 2015 with the option to extend for up to a further two x 12 months.

14. Whilst savings are unknown at this stage the framework approach has provided significant agglomeration of budgets to improve buying power. The framework provides ceiling rates that will be tested further by mini competition or direct contracts. Further savings will be investigated by collaborative programming of highway maintenance programmes.

Public Transport

15. The bulk renewal of 22,000 concessionary bus passes is underway. Throughout the summer bus passholders were encouraged to update their address details with the Council before the end of December (if these had changed in the last five years), to ensure that their new pass is sent to the correct address. This has been further enhanced by a data cleanse of the information we hold in the Customer Management System, with over 2,000 addresses updated. A communications

campaign is underway to reassure passholders that their new pass will be sent to them during March 2016.

16. Consultation took place regarding a proposed change to the assessment process for concessionary travel. 630 consultation letters were sent to customers who would be directly affected by the proposed change, should it be implemented from April 2016. The proposed change is for Occupational Therapist assessments or the completion of a form by medical professionals to take place for those customers who can't prove automatic entitlement. The change would bring Darlington's assessment process more in line with recent changes to the Department for Transport guidelines relating to concessionary travel. The proposed change, specifically relates to existing customers and new customers from April 2016 who applied/apply on the basis of their ability to walk or drive. Comments from the consultation have been collated and will be submitted as part of a Cabinet report in March 2016.
17. New vinyls have been fitted to all town centre bus stops, funded through the LSTF. The vinyl's improve the visibility of the bus stops for those with visual impairments, with each stop letter (A, B, C etc.) being clearly identified in large vinyl text. They also improve the general look of the bus shelters, with the intention of attracting new customers to use the bus.
18. Work will start on improving the coach stop on 1 February 2016. This will include glass panels between some of the columns to provide some more shelter and which will incorporate the same graphic designs as the town centre bus shelters. There will also be new seating and lighting.
19. This year's Christmas campaign, 'More Festive, Less Fuss when you travel by bus' ran in November and December. The campaign used digital, social media, outdoor and radio channels to reach residents across Darlington, the wider Tees Valley and South Durham. In addition to the advertising activity we also held a series of events in town centres across the region, this included Darlington town centre, where TFM promotional staff gave away free hot drinks and mince pies to Christmas shoppers and encouraged them to use the bus. Initial indications are the campaign has been well received with a high number of people clicking through to the campaign landing page. The campaign has been funded jointly through Tees Valley's and County Durham's LSTF projects.
20. Darlington and Stockton councils are collaborating on a project to upgrade the Connect Tees Valley public transport information website, making it easier to navigate and improve the overall customer experience of using the site. A new local digital design agency was the successful tenderer for the work. It is expected the new website will be ready by March 2016. Following the upgrade there will be an online marketing campaign to promote both the new site and the newly incorporated Real Time bus information system which should also be ready by then.

Sustainable Transport

21. In 2015 the sustainable Transport team have demonstrated excellence in their field of work nationally securing a number of awards:
 - (a) UK bus awards 2015, Gold medal, Local Authority Bus Project of the Year (beating three PTE areas – Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, West Midlands and Monmouthshire).
 - (b) UK bus awards 2015, Silver Medal, Bus Marketing initiative (beating Merseyside, Greater Manchester, and Arriva UK bus).
 - (c) Smarter choices LSTF Awards 2015, Project Team of the Year (beating competition from 22 other areas including Greater Manchester, West Midlands, City of York, Tyne and Wear, Nottingham and London).
 - (d) Chartered Institute of Marketing Award 2014 for the 'Crying bus driver campaign'.
22. They were also nominated into the finals of the National Transport Awards 2015, Improvements to Bus Services category.
23. The Personalised Travel Planning programme has been extended until 5 February 2016. Between November and January, Advisors visited all local authorities in the Tees Valley and much of the work was focused on business engagement and helping people back into work by looking at realistic journey planning in jobcentres.
24. Travel Plans are now being written and submitted using a new online system, which makes accessing, updating and monitoring the plans going forward much easier to do. The travel plan for the Darlington Civic Theatre and Hullaballoon was written using this tool and developers are being encouraged to use the system when submitting planning applications in the future. Travel plans for Polam School, Darlington Memorial Hospital and Business Central are all being created with the tool, with the hospital travel plan including a survey of over 2000 staff. Further initiatives are also being offered to workplaces, with Capita receiving detailed recommendations following analysis of their staff survey, including help on a car sharing scheme and public transport promotions.
25. Work is underway with Virgin Trains East Coast to assist in the creation of a station travel plan at Bank Top station. This will be the first of nine station travel plans proposed by Virgin Trains East Coast and will play a key role in developing best practice. A site audit has been completed and plans to survey 250 station users will commence late January using Local Motion Travel Advisors, before analysis and feedback to Virgin. The station travel plan will include measures such as better signage, Personalised Travel Planning training for station staff and better promotion of local bus services. The station travel plan will also look at the routes to and from the station from all exits and recommend improvements.

26. All primary schools in Darlington now have their MEGA Motion packs and a number of schools have been reporting back on sustainable transport activities that they have been carrying out with their pupils. At the end of December, a new campaign was launched in partnership with Star Radio to increase awareness of the importance of active travel for families, not just during the school run but for any journey. The package, which runs until the end of March, incorporates a like, comment and share Facebook campaign with incentives, an on-air competition to win a set of bikes for your family and commercial airtime driving people to the Facebook page. It is supported online by a dedicated microsite on Star Radio's website and all content is shared by Star Radio's Facebook page. This campaign has resulted in MEGA Motion Facebook 'likes' more than doubling and this will be an important tool in the future.
27. Groundwork has been running a walking programme on behalf of the Local Motion team since March 2015. Between October and December 315 adults and 264 children took part in walks including a wild food walk, a Halloween walk and a wreath making walk.
28. The travel safety campaign ran throughout November and December for the second year due to its success last year. The model of the campaign (five weekly themes with tips and advice posted each day on social media with travel safety related giveaways) ran the same this year however instead of concentrating solely on the residents of Darlington the campaign was promoted to the whole of the Tees Valley. Working in partnership with transport and road safety colleagues across the Tees Valley the social media content covered both generic travel related tips and location specific event advertising. In addition we have worked with AGE UK across the Tees Valley to distribute reflective jute shopping bags and flyers covering top travel tips for winter.

Tees Valley Culture Plan Update

29. We gave consideration to the recommendations contained within the Tees Valley Unlimited Culture Group Task and Finish report and to the recent cultural activity in Darlington and gave our full support to the recommendations which will help further the cultural ambitions for Darlington.
30. Darlington has played a significant role within the Task and Finish Group and the model of Creative Darlington is held up as a positive example of ambition for culture within a challenging financial environment.
31. We also requested that the Health and Well-Being Board consider the evidence base for arts interventions to address health inequalities.
32. Further work is underway and this will form part of the Medium Term Financial Plan process to understand current capacity and resource requirements to support implementation.

Dolphin Centre Capital Scheme

33. Phase 1 of the improvement work is almost complete at the Dolphin Centre with a significant amount of mechanical and electrical installations replaced for the pool complex completed over the last three months whilst the wider Centre has remained open. The Pool ceiling has been removed and a new ceiling and the lighting installed. The Pool Complex now has lighter, brighter feel with much improved energy efficiency. Boilers have been replaced, air handling and ventilation systems renewed and the Pool Filtration system has been upgraded to maximise efficiency.
34. The project remains on track and the Main Pool, Diving Pool and Toddler Pool re-opened to customers on 9 January 2016. At that point, the Training Pool closed until late March to facilitate phase two of the project. This will include new lighting and tiles, improvement to the ventilation in this area and the replacement of the waterproof membrane.
35. During the Main Pool closure period over the last 3 months, more than 1800 children per week have continued to Learn To Swim through our School programme and Learn to Swim scheme in the Training Pool.

Sports Development – Darlington Most Active in Tees Valley

36. Sport England published the latest results from its Sport and Physical Activity participation survey on 10 December 2015, which confirmed that Darlington is the most active district in the Tees Valley (also second placed out of the 12 North East Districts). 37.5 per cent of residents are now participating in at least one session of moderate intensity exercise per week. This progress has been enabled by a diverse range of Sports Development initiatives supporting facility improvements through securing grants, club/coach development and school sport initiatives.
37. The Sports Development Team engaged 1,558 separate Darlington residents during the last quarter through a range of initiatives including the Active Darlington Project, after school clubs, community outreach sport and physical activity provision and holiday activities sessions. During this period the team have delivered 119 different projects and 1,718 sessions with an average contact time of five hours per participant. 42 per cent of the participants are male and 58 per cent female. 48 per cent of the participants were under 14 and 52 per cent being aged 14 and over, which again shows that the service is reaching the older demographic. 5 per cent of the participants have a disability and 5 per cent have come from a Black and Minority Ethnic Groups background.

Disability Sessions

38. Clinical Commissioning Group funding has enabled a programme of physical activity engagement with 46 adults aged between 21-60 years. We have had a total of 1,536 visits over a six-month period and we currently run six weekly sessions working with four adult day care centres in the town. These sessions have delivered a wide variety of activities including; Boccia, New Age Kurling,

Target Games, Table Tennis, Walking, Orienteering, Trampoline, Dance Aerobics and Tri Golf. Through the sessions we have been able to offer training to our staff on how to adapt exercise for participants with disabilities and build capacity.

Playmakers

39. Another Playmaker leadership day targeting primary school children was delivered at the Dolphin Centre on 6 November 2015. This is the third day we have organised and another 112 children attended and have been certified with a nationally recognised award. The course is becoming widely recognised across schools and we have already had requests for when the next one will be (July 2016).
40. Darlington Sports Development Coaches delivered this event alongside Sports Leaders Level 2 trained students from St Aidan's Church of England Secondary School and Darlington School of Mathematics and Science. The students were qualified through a course delivered by Move More coaches, which certifies the leaders to deliver under direct supervision with a nationally recognised qualification – the Playmaker Day allowing them to put this into practice. Further success of this day saw Healthy Darlington receive 'Leadership Academy Status' from Sports Leaders UK recognising the centre as a beacon of good practice across the nation. There are 3000 centres in the UK and only 120 have received this status.

Programmes

41. The Team has delivered a range of other Sports Development programmes over the last quarter including 'Back to Netball', which has engaged 155 women who then have an exit route into a local club to sustain participation. There has also been a focus on facilitating voluntary groups to deliver the 'Couch to 5K' running programme with an exit route into Darlington's hugely successful Park Run in South Park and a programme of Indoor Cricket focusing on engagement with the Bengali community in the town.
42. One of the barriers that we addressed with the Back to Netball programme was the need for childcare, as we found that many of the women couldn't attend due to lack of childcare provision. We therefore set up a Kids Club to run alongside the programme in which ladies could bring their children to a coach led multi activity based session, which they attended while the ladies played netball. We found that there was a consistency of attendees from those ladies whose children attended the Kids Club.

Healthy Darlington Hub

43. The Healthy Darlington Hub service continues to support local people to eat well and move more through supporting lifestyle change. The service supports on average 350 clients on a 1:1 basis during any one quarter, with officers delivering in excess of 230 appointments per month, in addition to group based outreach work and delivery. Retention continues to be excellent, and almost all (98%) of those

who continue to engage with support, report making positive lifestyle changes.

44. In addition to the 1:1 behaviour change support, Healthy Darlington Hub officers also work out in the local community with range of partners such as local schools, primary and secondary health-care providers such as GPs, and voluntary and charity sector organisations. Of particular note is work alongside Reid Street School to support them to apply for the Food for Life award, work with the Carlbury Unit at the Education Village to help the young people there to access existing Healthy Darlington services, and support of the Diabetes support groups at Age UK Darlington. Work for the New Year includes new exercise provision specifically for those with long term neurological and musculoskeletal conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease, and also work alongside Diabetes UK to support the development of a Diabetes Support Group in the Dolphin Centre, which will be managed and operated by volunteers.

Darlington Football Club (DFC)1883/Darlington Rugby Football Club (DRFC) Ground Share

45. Officers have continued to work closely with DFC 1883 and DRFC to progress with a ground share deal at Blackwell Meadows. Funding has been secured through Sport England and more work is ongoing with the Football Association in January to progress the scheme.

Remembrance Parade

46. Many people gathered in support of Remembrance Sunday on 8 November 2015 at Darlington Cenotaph. The Events Team planned and delivered the traffic management overseeing the parade from Holy Trinity Church to Darlington Memorial Hospital.

Darlington Christmas Light Switch

47. On 26 November 2014 this year's light switch on proved to be the best one to date. Katie Coleman, local girl who was an X Factor contestant headed the line-up of performances supported by North Road band and a very talented 14 year-old, Ty Lewis
48. Carol for Kids winners St Mary's Cockerton performed their winning Carol whilst dancing entertainment was provided by Dance Wright and Hurworth Street Dance.
49. Media partners TFM had their breakfast show presenters Steve and Karen host the event while Pantomime star Brendon Sheerin switched the lights on alongside Katie, followed by a fantastic mini fireworks display.
50. The audience stretched back as far as the eye could see with over 8,000 people attending. The lights switch on coincided with the start of late night shopping and the Festive Markets.

Reindeer Parade

51. Large crowds turned out on 29 November 2015 to see the reindeer parade despite poor weather conditions. Well over 4,000 people lined the parade route around the town, which started and finished in the Cornmill Shopping Centre. The Events team worked in partnership with the Cornmill, delivering the traffic management aspect of the event.

Bookstart Treasure Gifting for Pre-school Children

52. The Bookstart Coordinator has visited nurseries to deliver the Bookstart Treasure Packs, which are given to all 3-4 year olds before they start school. The packs contain information for parents and carers to promote reading and sharing stories and rhymes with young children. The visits, which are provided free of charge by the library, incorporate a story time and rhyme time as well as the book pack gifting. Parents are encouraged to attend so that the 'Reading Every Day' message can be promoted.
53. We have achieved our target to reach 100 per cent of eligible children in Darlington during 2015/16.

Northern Children's Book Festival

54. As part of the Northern Children's Book Festival, Darlington Libraries organised some exciting author visits. Steve Skidmore and Steve Barlow AKA The Two Steves, were taken to visit pupils at Springfield and Whinfield schools. Poet Paul Cookson visited Rydal Academy and The Education Village Resource Centre. All authors were extremely entertaining and inspired children aged 7-12 years to read and create stories of their own.

Darlington Dementia Café and Hub and Launch of Dementia Friendly Darlington

55. Darlington Library is working with the local Alzheimer's Society and hosting a monthly Dementia Café. On the first Tuesday of the month anyone affected by dementia, as a sufferer, carer or relative is welcome to join us for tea and cake and a friendly chat. The café is held from 1.30pm to 3pm.
56. A new one-stop-shop for information and signposting about dementia is now available at Crown Street Library. A member of the Dementia Hub team will be at the library every second Tuesday of the month between 12 noon and 3pm. Books, leaflets and other information about the condition are available at any time from the library.
57. On 8 December the 'Dementia Friendly Darlington' Launch was held in the Crown Street Art Gallery. Attendees were able to find out what support is available from both businesses and services for those affected by dementia in Darlington.

Centre for Local Studies

58. The last World War 1 talk on the 5th Battalion DLI by Stephen Nicholson took place on 12 November to round off 'A Poppy for a Soldier' events. Two school groups visited and found out about individual soldiers and named poppies in their memory. The Poppy for a Soldier project saw over 1,100 knitted poppies named by local people in memory of Darlington men who died in WW1. The project raised awareness of the individual men and their lives before the outbreak of war, and then followed what happened to them after enlistment.
59. The Centre is holding an exhibition about the 12th Century St Cuthbert's Church, with drawings and leaflets from the archives. There is also a small exhibition about the life of Katherine Pease Routledge to link up with the Suzie Stephens exhibition in the Art Gallery.

Creative Darlington

60. Creative Darlington attended a North East Cultural Challenge event on 8 December 2015 in Durham City, co-ordinated by the Bridge North East organisation, Tyne and Wear Museums. Darren Henley (Chief Executive of Arts Council England), Ed Vaizey (HM Minister of State for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries) and Schools Minister Nick Gibb launched the Cultural Education Challenge for England on 14 October 2015. The Cultural Education Challenge is a national call to action for those with an interest in cultural education – government, local authorities, businesses, schools, and arts and cultural organisations.

Audience Development

61. The Creative Darlington board is considering a proposal from Caroline Pearce, Luxi Ltd, to build and develop funding for artists commissions and residencies within the Jabberwocky Market programme post spring 2016. Battersea Arts Centre has applied to Arts Council England's strategic touring programme to extend the operation of their Collaborative Touring Network from 2016 to spring 2020 and to include eight localities, including Darlington through the Jabberwocky Market. The result of Battersea Arts Centres Collaborative Touring Network application to the Strategic Touring Fund is expected in spring 2016.
62. Creative Darlington attended a steering group meeting of the Festival of Thrift in November 2015 that considered development of the festival going forward and reflected on the delivery of Festival of Thrift 2015, which attracted 45,000 visitors, the highest attendance yet. The Festival of Thrift secured a North East Tourism award at a ceremony at Newcastle Civic Centre in November 2015.
63. Creative Darlington has met with the Hallé Orchestra around promoting its concerts in Darlington on 23 June 2016. The project has secured support from Arts Council England, Creative Darlington, Durham Music Service, Orchestras Live and various trusts, foundations and sponsors.

Developing Finance for Arts Activity

64. Anton Hecht delivered a Festival of Flipbook animation project in Crown Street Library with support from a Developing Finance for Arts Activity award from Creative Darlington, a Grants for the Arts award from Arts Council England, and support from Darlington Library service. The project included workshops in animation and commissioning original flipbook animations, which were displayed on the library shelves from 23 October through November 2015, with high levels of additional digital engagement.
65. Joelene English Dance Theatre delivered two performances of 'February 11th 1963' in Crown Street Library on 31 October with support from a Developing Finance for Arts Activity award from Creative Darlington, a Grants for the Arts award from Arts Council England, and support from Darlington Library service. The performance included a trio of young dancers recruited through a series of workshops in and around Darlington involving local schools and Darlington Civic Theatres Artspark group.
66. A performance in development, 'Empire of the Rat', is being produced by Caroline Pearce, with support from Creative Darlington and Arts Council England. It is expected to be premiered in Darlington in spring 2016 before being shared at Battersea Arts Centre. 'Empire of the Rat' is written by Vanessa Van Badham, an Australian writer, social commentator, playwright and novelist, who is a regular columnist for Guardian Australia.
67. Creative Darlington has offered support to Darlington based producer, Sarah Wilson to programme a series of live music events for families with young children in Darlington.

Crown Street Art Gallery

68. Two fascinating exhibitions have been developed with Developing Finance for Arts Activity in Darlington awards from Creative Darlington.
69. 'Cartography for Girls', an original exhibition by Darlington based artist, Carol Sommer, ran from 4 to 25 November 2015 and attracted 1,575 visits. Carol teaches at Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College and is currently studying an MA in Fine Art at Teesside University. The exhibition supported her professional development as an artist.
70. The 'Retracing Routledge' exhibition opened on 28 November 2015 with a well-attended gallery talk by Susie Stephens. The exhibition ran until 14 January 2016 and records Susie's efforts in running and walking from Darlington to Southampton, cycling across South America and sailing from Chile to Rapa Nui, retracing and highlighting the achievements of Katherine Routledge (from the Pease family), who travelled to Easter Island, as Rapa Nui was then called, on the Mana expedition in 1914 and published a book on the expedition shortly thereafter. Susie was keen to celebrate the heritage of Darlington and to benefit current residents of Rapa Nui, and her fundraising has helped a Rapa Nui resident go on to

higher education. The exhibition includes an animated film produced by Kandoo Arts and over a hundred pupils from Hummersknott Academy during a busy day learning and applying the techniques of shadow puppetry.

The Town Hall Gallery

71. The Town Hall display space offers opportunities for early stage professionals and/or local colleges and arts groups to exhibit. Locally based design graduate, Abigail Dennison exhibited designs for her Sunday Girl magazine, which has recently been produced and is already being stocked by the Tate Gallery and Selfridges, at Darlington Town Hall from Monday 28 September to 27 November 2015. Abbie also staged a promotional event for Sunday Girl at Mima in the Autumn.
72. A new exhibition considering the science of therapeutic value of colour by Claire Alpatuns was on display in the Town Hall exhibition space from 30 November 2015 to 15 January 2016.

The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts

73. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts continues to manage a successful exhibitions programme with several sales being made during the current exhibition by Paul Dillon and Heather Kinsella. 3,711 visits were recorded to The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts in November 2015. On 6 December approximately 30 people attended over the day to take advantage of a 'Hey Clay' event, designed to get more people involved in working with clay. The Bridge Centre for Visual Arts organisation are currently organising a festive event at the venue.

Darlington Civic Theatre

74. The ArtsSpark youth theatre group has been chosen to perform in The National Theatre Connections 500, which is a national festival of youth theatre. Our young people will be performing Eclipse by Simon Armitage. Performances will take place at the Civic Theatre in February 2016 and then at a regional event at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough.
75. At the end of October the Civic Theatre presented a show at the Quaker Meeting House as part of the TakeOff festival organised by Theatre Hullabaloo. 'Underfoot' was an interactive performance with a live musical accompaniment for children aged 1-5 years.
76. The 'Importance of Being Earnest' starring Nigel Havers, Martin Jarvis and Sian Phillips was very well received by audiences in Darlington. During the week of the run young journalists from Darlington College had the opportunity to interview the cast and some of their articles made it into the Northern Echo.
77. The latest production to visit the Theatre from The Touring Consortium Theatre Company was 'Brave New World', which was accompanied by a high quality audience development offer. With the support of Darlington for Culture, theatre

ambassadors ran an initiative to promote the show to new audiences and then were present at each performance to help to welcome audiences and collect their feedback. On the first night of the run there was live music in the bar provided by Mark Hand and Matt Case and there were also two sci-fi stalls reflecting the dystopian themes of the play. The Wednesday performance of the play was captioned and there was also a touch tour and audio description offered on Friday and Saturday. Students from Longfield Academy and Conyers School attended a page to stage workshop led by the theatre company and 7 school groups also saw the show.

78. 'The Full Monty' was one of the most successful shows to visit the Theatre this year, with box office takings of over £150,000 and secondary spend of over £17,000. It demonstrated the potential for income generation for the restored theatre.
79. The Director of the Theatre has been working with Darlington for Culture to develop a partnership to support cultural volunteering within the Civic Theatre and in the community. She was also invited to speak about volunteering at the Partnership Board meeting in November. She also gave a presentation to the 11-19 Partnership of Darlington schools outlining plans for the restored theatre and for The Hullaballoon and the new schools offer that is being developed. There was very positive feedback from the group.
80. The new season What's On brochure was launched at the beginning of December, it includes some strong shows including 'The Mousetrap', 'Flare Path', 'Of Mice and Men', 'Thriller Live' and Vincent and Flavia's 'Last Tango'. Cinderella, this years pantomime, also opened at the beginning of December and has proved very popular with families. New for this year was a special 'relaxed' performance. These performances are specifically designed to welcome people with an Autistic Spectrum Condition, learning disability or sensory and communication disorders into theatres to give those who otherwise might feel excluded the chance to experience live theatre.
81. The Panto cast were kept busy by the Theatre's marketing team promoting the show and in their first week greeted people in the Civic Reception at the Town Hall inviting them to try on the glass slipper and also visited the children's ward at Darlington Memorial Hospital.

Waste Services

82. Working a four-day week helps reduce the catch-up period, which previously often lasted for three weeks after the festive break. This has shortened somewhat and by working a bank holiday, staff returned to normal collections on 5 January 2016 resulting in a minimal change for residents. In addition, as we do at each Christmas period, side waste was taken, thus ensuring by week commencing 12 January 2016 all residents had their additional Christmas waste collected and the service was back to normal.

83. The Council's Refuse and Recycling Team were recently shortlisted in the category of Best Refuse/Recycling Service by the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE). Although ultimately they did not win the accolade, to be shortlisted is a testament to the excellent service that is provided.

Street Scene

84. Street Scene services recently won the Most Improved Street Cleansing Service award from the Association of Public Service Excellence. This is testament to the team, who despite experiencing numerous efficiencies in the previous years have still managed to provide a street cleansing service.

85. In relation to grounds maintenance, the winter programme is ongoing and is on target to be completed for the end of the winter period. The programme includes the reduction/pruning of all Council owned hedges, shrubs, etc.

Cemeteries and Crematorium

86. The Council's Cemetery and Crematorium Team was recently shortlisted in the category of Best Cemetery and Cremation Service by APSE. Although ultimately they did not win the accolade, to be shortlisted is a testament to the excellent service that is provided.

Nursery/Horticultural Services

87. Plaudits continue to be received for the works being undertaken by the Horticultural Team in Council owned sheltered accommodation.

Commercial Cardboard Collection Scheme

88. The Council currently has 51 contracts for this service. Reviews have confirmed that due to the resources required and the costs attributed to the service, it is no longer economically viable for the Council to continue providing commercial cardboard collections. The service will therefore cease from March 2016. All businesses that currently use the service will be informed. There are other providers in the market that they can use.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio