
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.

Job Fair

2. 1,667 people attended the Darlington jobs fair on 28 January held at the Dolphin Centre:-
- (a) 15 businesses took a stand, recruiting for over 700 actual roles;
 - (b) 500 of the roles available were based solely in Darlington;
 - (c) Businesses were a mix of those from the new Feethams and North Road developments (six) as well as existing growing businesses (nine);
 - (d) Businesses were from a range of sectors including hospitality and leisure, healthcare, engineering, retail, logistics, business and financial services and public sector;
 - (e) Nine support organisations also attended to provide advice and guidance for those with debt advice, CV writing and self-employment;
 - (f) Feedback from attendees expressed that the Fair provided a good opportunity to actually meet employers face-to-face to discuss roles and make an impression;
 - (g) Feedback from businesses involved was incredibly positive with all saying the event far exceeded their expectations with regards to footfall and calibre of candidates, as well as expressing that the event was very well organised with a good steady stream of people.

Sahaviriya Steel Industries (SSI) and Lets Grow Funding for Businesses

3. To date on the SSI support scheme :-
- (a) Three companies have been supported
 - (b) A total of £204,500 in grant assistance was requested.
 - (c) The total amount secured for the companies was £173,000 in grant assistance which has led to the safeguarding of 20 jobs.

4. To date on the Tees Valley Capital Grant Scheme:
 - (a) One company has been supported through the process
 - (b) The grant ask was £70,000
 - (c) The Expression of Interest (EOI) was approved at £64,000 grant assistance, pending full application/due diligence.
5. There are three applications for grant assistance currently being supported and a healthy pipeline of new prospective projects coming forward, generated by business engagement visits.

Progress Rail – Production Facility at Faverdale

6. A planning application was approved for the erection of a £5m manufacturing factory building, incorporating offices, car parking and external yard access on seven acres of land at Faverdale. Site works are expected to commence April 2016, which will retain approximately 70 jobs from its existing operation and potentially create another twenty.

Invest in Darlington Website (www.investindarlington.co.uk)

7. Since the launch of the website in October 2015 until 9 February 2016 the website has attracted over 4,000 page views, with almost 3,000 of those being 'unique page views'. Increased activity on other social media channels, including Twitter and Facebook, has generated awareness of the site and although the majority of users and viewers are from within the UK, the site is now being viewed and used in the USA, Brazil, Canada, Australia, Russia and European markets.

Ingenious Darlington Branding

8. The high profile place-branding project for Darlington is continuing to develop. In recent months progress has been made in the following ways :-
 - (a) Governance - A new format for the meetings has been established, with the Steering Group and Media Group combining to be a single, focussed group. A new Chair has been appointed, namely, Professor Cliff Hardcastle, formerly of Teesside University. Professor Hardcastle has connections to Darlington and will be a leading figure in raising the profile of the brand and Darlington generally.
 - (b) Promotion - The dedicated website, www.ingeniousdarlington.co.uk will soon be developed further, with additional sections being added to help businesses adopt the brand and clearly outlining the benefits of adopting it. A lot of progress has been made in social media which is a valuable support in this area and has been provided by the Teesside University graduate intern, Rebecca Watson, who started working on the project in January. There are now dedicated 'Ingenious' profiles on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, with

LinkedIn being added shortly. The more business-focussed twitter is particularly developing well, with numbers of followers increasing at a very positive rate.

- (c) Business adoption - Around 40 businesses/organisations are 'on-board' and committed to using the branding. A similar number have expressed interest and these organisations are currently being followed up. The number of businesses 'signed up' is expected to increase considerably in the near future as we currently have access to more staffing resource. Professor Hardcastle has been making contact with some key businesses and Rebecca Watson has been supporting the engagement process by arranging meetings for group members.
- (d) Plans are developing for a major 'Festival of Ingenuity' taking place in Darlington Town Centre on 8 and 9 July. The core aim of the event is to raise the profile of the Ingenious brand within Darlington to businesses and residents.
- (e) The re-branded schools 'Ingenious Engineering' event is taking place in the Dolphin Centre on 8 July and there will be an ingenious business expo in the Market Square on the 8 and 9 July. A number of high profile businesses will be attending, showcasing their ingenuity through interesting and interactive displays.

Foundation for Jobs (FFJ)

- 9. Low Carbon Engineering Event took place on 15 October which was renamed the Ingenious Engineering Event for this year and attended by over 160 students. It is the fourth Foundation for Jobs low carbon engineering event and was, again, hosted at Lingfield Point which provided the Beehive and support free of charge.
- 10. In November 2015 FFJ again hosted the ICE bridge borrowed from the Institution of Civil Engineering with around 150 pupils from six schools attending sessions between 25 November and 4 December 2015.
- 11. Virgin Money Make £5 Grow at Red Hall Primary School ran from October through to December 2015 with 47 pupils taking part. Final products were sold at Lingfield Point and The Student Loans Company made a profit of £94.
- 12. In November FFJ assisted with a teachers open day at the new National Biologics Manufacturing Centre which went really well and received very positive feedback.
- 13. FFJ's next employability scheme is in partnership with Barclays at Longfield Academy and has already started.
- 14. A pilot project with Keepmoat and Darlington College on construction, which will last for six weeks and involves 34 pupils at the Education Village, has also just started.

15. Subsea week was held 8 to 12 February at Darlington College. Modus have once again pledged the support of its staff, particularly apprentice Tom Young.

Local Plan Developer Day

16. In November 2015 Cabinet agreed that work be halted on the Local Plan Making and Growing Places Development Plan Document and that work should begin on a new Local Plan as soon as practicable. In January over 50 stakeholders from the development industry met to explore the key issues for developing sustainably in Darlington over the next 20 years and beyond. Attendees were asked to participate in workshops exploring ideas around plan making, housing and place making in Darlington with fellow professionals, facilitated by local and national experts. Stakeholders who believed they could deliver sustainable housing development in either the short or long term were encouraged to contact the Council to discuss their proposals being included in the Council's housing land supply and considered through the Local Plan process. Stakeholders were also encouraged to consider engaging in master planning wider sites where appropriate to produce more sustainable development overall.

Interim Planning Position

17. In the absence of the Making and Growing Places policies, in the period before the new plan is adopted, an Interim Planning Position Statement is being produced to help interpret the National Planning Policy Framework at a local level and provide guidance to developers while the new Local Plan is being prepared. Place Scrutiny Committee has considered and supported the approach being taken, and Officers have also had a meeting with the Association of Parish Councils to explain the implications of this, and discuss how they can get involved in the Local Plan process. The Interim Position Statement will be reported to Cabinet in April.

Planning Applications

18. Significant applications have been granted within the Borough for housing. These include two applications for housing in Middleton St George comprising of 450 houses, seventy three affordable houses on Haughton Road and a development of 35 units for persons over the age of 55 at Carmel Road.
19. Long term pre application negotiations continue to be had relating to housing developments at West Park, Durham Tees Valley, Great Burdon and Harrowgate Hill.

Latest Jobs/gross Value Added (GVA) Statistics

20. Below are the latest statistics on jobs and economic growth:-
 - (a) Darlington's current employment rate is 72.7 per cent;
 - (b) Unemployment is currently 6.8 per cent;

- (c) 2014 data shows Darlington to have 50,100 employee jobs, 67.5 per cent of these are full time, 32.5 per cent part time;
- (d) Since 2011 Darlington has seen an increase of 5.9 per cent growth in employee jobs;
- (e) This is higher growth in employee jobs than both the North East average (2.6 per cent) and the UK average (5.1per cent) when analysed over the same time period (2011 to 2014);
- (f) Darlington's overall employment rate in the last three years (2011 to 2014) also shows steady growth increasing by +4.3. per cent Darlington's in employment level (72.7per cent) is higher than the North East average and is not far behind the national average (73.4 per cent);
- (g) In 2014 Darlington businesses contributed £2,502M to the national economy, growing by 8.9 per cent since 2013; and
- (h) 2014 GVA per head showed an increase of £1,939 on the 2013 figure.

Darlington Station Masterplan

- 21. The Masterplan will set out a strategy that contributes to economic growth across the Tees Valley and neighbouring areas. It will do this through linked plans that guide the re-development of the Station and its surrounding areas.
- 22. Network Rail continues to be positive about the need to invest in rail at Darlington. The Masterplan envisages significant investment at Darlington Station, including the provision of new platforms to the east of the East Coast Main Line adjacent to Garbutt Square. Network Rail are currently considering a very similar rail scheme for implementation by 2024 and the Council is making the case for further work to be carried out to fulfil the Masterplan. Such investment is seen as critical to improving the rail connectivity of the Tees Valley locally, regionally and nationally to create the right conditions for further economic growth. The economic benefits will also be shared by adjacent areas of County Durham and North Yorkshire.
- 23. The preferred Masterplan option was discussed with stakeholders at a Workshop in January 2016 receiving widespread support. Arrangements for approval by Cabinet and public consultation are being made.

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Economy and Regeneration Portfolio