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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO**

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

**Local Plan**

2. In April, Cabinet approved a suite of papers that will aim to both guide development decisions and inform the preparation of the new Local Plan. Thus, with the withdrawal of the Making and Growing Places Development Plan Document, an Interim Planning Position Statement sets out the relevant local material planning considerations that should be used in the application of the National policy on presumption in favour of sustainable development. An interim position for new housing is also included in this statement. This acknowledges the up-to-date evidence of increased housing needs and identifies much of the land that has been previously identified through the Making and Growing Places plan preparation process that could be brought forward for sustainable housing development.
3. An up-to-date Local Plan is essential to meeting the development needs of the Borough and the Council remaining in control of development. The new Local Plan will cover the period 2016 to 2036 and the ambition is to prepare a Local Plan to be submitted for inspection in two years (with adoption likely to take another one year). To achieve this target a more streamlined approach is required that meets the statutory regulations and will be found sound at examination. Innovative approaches to stakeholder engagement will be investigated, use of master planning for strategic allocations and concise documentation should all help with the challenging timescale.
4. Cabinet approved various key documents, including the Local Development Scheme 2016 to 2019, which set out the programme for the Local Plan preparation and a draft revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) explaining how and when people, groups and organisations can get involved in the plan-making process. As part of a 'Big Debate' about the future development of the Borough over the next 20 years, draft Strategic Issues and Options were agreed as the basis for consultation over the Summer.

**Developer Day – 17 March 2016**

5. A Developer Day was held to showcase Feethams Development Plots 1, 2 and 3 and to discuss other development opportunities available across Darlington, such as Faverdale, Morton Palms and Central Park.

## **Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan**

6. The first Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) was submitted to Government in March 2014.
7. The SEP was a complex document of 130 pages, met Government requirements at the time and led to Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) securing a Growth Deal worth £104.2m.
8. Local Growth funding supporting development in Darlington includes the new access road at Central Park and work on the Masterplan for Darlington Station. Future projects include further enabling work at Central Park, Morton Palms and 'Ingenium Park' (land behind Cummins Engines and Cleveland Bridge).
9. In light of the Devolution Deal and the formation of a Combined Authority and Northern powerhouse agenda, TVU are reviewing and updating the Strategic Economic Plan, with the aim of launching the new plan in July 2016. As part of this process, local authorities, businesses and support agencies have been involved in a range of thematic workshops to consider what the key priorities are for the revised SEP.

### **Business Engagement**

10. The business engagement team are currently dealing with a number of 'live' business expansion and inward investment enquiries which include:
  - (a) An organisational requirement for 25,000 sq ft of office space;
  - (b) Applications to Let's Grow and the Sahaviriya Steel Industries (SSI) scheme; and
  - (c) Offer continued support to our indigenous business base.

### **Feethams Complex**

11. Work continues at a pace on the cinema complex and it is pleasing to see a number of establishments have opened for business, including Nandos, Bella Italia, Prezzo and the Woollen Mill public house, with others to open shortly.

### **Foundation for Jobs (FFJ)**

12. FFJ has been awarded a £25,000 grant from the Royal Academy of Engineering Ingenious Award and £10,000 from the County Durham Community Foundation Education Trust. This will make a major contribution to the 2016/17 Foundation for Jobs programme of activities for young people.
13. The Ingenious Award from the Royal Academy of Engineering was secured through a funding application submitted in partnership with Modus Subsea Intervention Limited and Queen Elizabeth (QE) Sixth Form College. As well as providing funding, support from the Royal Academy of Engineering, will help underpin FFJ's

legitimacy with the engineering community.

14. Darlington's eight Secondary Schools, QE Sixth Form and Darlington College are also each contributing £3,000 towards the running costs of the FFJ programme.
15. The FFJ budget for events and activities is significantly enhanced through support from businesses and is estimated to have a value of at least £30,000 of 'in kind' support through involvement of staff and use of premises and equipment.
16. FFJ has built upon the success of pilot employability skills sessions which took place in March and April last year, teaching young people CV and interview skills and involving company human resource departments. These culminate in the young people being taken to an outside location where they are interviewed for a 'mock' job for which they have been given a briefing by representatives of local employers. The aim is to give them a real world experience.
17. Sessions have been taking place with Barclays staff at Longfield Academy and Student Loans Company staff at Hummersknott Academy.
18. The new construction industry project in partnership with Keepmoat and Darlington College, involving 34 pupils at the Education Village, concluded in March with eleven student groups each presenting a tender for a new changing room facility judged by Keepmoat management.
19. The overall aim of the challenge was to demonstrate to pupils the many varied job roles within the construction sector at a time when it is facing skills gaps. This is partly attributed to a perception amongst young people, and their parents, that there is a lack of employment opportunities following the economic downturn, when in fact the opposite is true with Keepmoat recording turnover of more than £1bn last year.
20. Teams of eight students from seven schools in Darlington took part in the Hovercraft Event in March. Each team constructed a basic hovercraft capable of carrying a pilot which then raced another team.
21. An E-commerce project led by Curo Marketing took place at the QE Sixth Form in March with students required to prepare a pitch for a company set to take all its business online. Digital industries are an important growing North East sector and FFJ had already part-funded a course delivered by Teesside University, in early 2015, to ensure all secondary schools had a teacher fully trained in delivering computer coding sessions.

### **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)**

22. In April 2015 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) put out a call for the next round of European Social Fund (ESF) under the YEI. Projects are to support 15 to 29 year olds who are at risk of not engaging in education, employment or training (NEET) to progress into employment.

23. The Tees Valley five local authorities (LAs) put together a partnership bid along with a number of employability and training organisations, with Hartlepool Borough Council as the lead accountable body.
24. In February the DWP confirmed that subject to contract and completion of pre-contract conditions the bid had been successful. The project will run until 31 July 2018.
25. Darlington Councils share of the programme will be £520,000, made up of £390,000 of YEI/ESF funding, £50,000 match from County Durham Community Foundation (CDCF) and a further £80,000 one off contribution from the Council.
26. The Darlington Borough Council Learning and Skills Service will act as the delivery body and a small team of staff will be recruited on fixed term contracts using the YEI funding to deliver the required outcomes. The Learning and Skills Service has successfully managed similar ESF projects since 2008.
27. The project will deliver support to around 200 young people (aged 16 to 29) to engage them in education and training and move them into employment. This will include 1:1 support, careers advice, employability and enterprise skills training as well as developing the practical skills required for interview and employment.
28. There are currently 117 16 to 17 year olds not participating in education and training and a further 665 18 to 29 year olds on out-of-work benefits as well as a number of 18 to 29 year olds who are classed as economically inactive. All these groups are eligible for support under YEI.

### **Ingenious Darlington Branding**

29. The Ingenious place-branding project for Darlington is continuing to develop. In recent months progress has been made in the following ways :-
  - (a) Governance – Professor Cliff Hardcastle, formerly with Teesside University, has agreed to be the new Chair of the Private Sector Steering Group;
  - (b) Promotion – The ‘Ingenious’ social media profiles continue to develop at a very encouraging rate. There are currently 550 followers on twitter, double the amount of followers in January and 60 likes on Facebook, also double the figure from January. Much of this progress is down to the work of a Teesside University graduate intern recently appointed on a short term contract to work on promoting the brand;
  - (c) Business adoption - Around 40 businesses/organisations are ‘on-board’ and committed to using the branding; and
  - (d) A ‘Festival of Ingenuity’ event will take place in Darlington Town Centre on 8 and 9 July. The event aims to raise Darlington’s profile as a place of ingenuity and encourage more businesses and the community to get behind promoting Darlington as an ingenious place to live, work and do business. Plans for the

event include:

- (i) A schools 'Ingenious Engineering' event taking place in the Dolphin Centre on 8 July;
- (ii) A two day 'ingenious business' expo in the Market Square; and
- (iii) Entertainment, food and refreshments – around the Market Square and other parts of the Town Centre.

### **Red Hall Master Plan**

30. Following an extensive public engagement, 'Planning for Real' process and ongoing consultation, the Red Hall Masterplan was adopted by Cabinet on 5 April. The Masterplan was based on a number of core values developed with residents and included:

- (a) Work with most of the existing housing stock to bring it up to 21st century standards whilst also tackling the physical appearance, public realm, parking and access issues that have been identified;
- (b) Create high quality open space in and around the estate with greater opportunities for younger children's play, better lighting, levels of amenity and maintenance;
- (c) Secure greater access into, around and within the estate for all modes of transport taking into consideration the need for slow traffic speeds, safety and ease of businesses and healthcare;
- (d) Secure improved playing pitches, including practice and five-a-side football, changing rooms and other sporting facilities, for example a skate park;
- (e) Build new houses in and around the estate as a means of securing improvements and an increased number of residents to attract services and facilities, whilst also respecting the built and natural heritage in the area; and
- (f) Seek to improve the management and policing of key anti-social behaviour problems including fly tipping, graffiti and irresponsible dog ownership through a multi-agency approach.

31. The Masterplan was adopted alongside the Red Hall Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy which seeks to:-

- (a) work with the community in the ongoing implementation of the Masterplan;
- (b) develop skills and capacity within the community to be more resilient, and
- (c) take advantage of the surrounding job opportunities and environmental improvements proposed in the wider Easter Growth Zone.

32. Red Hall is in a favourable position at the centre of the development of 2500 new homes and is the proposed local centre for the area, alongside the historic village of Haughton. The primary school and Community Centre are envisaged to serve both the local area and new community that has recently been identified by NHS as a 'Healthy New Town', attracting initial grant support and future core funding for healthcare provision.
33. The Masterplan proposes a number of projects to be delivered, which include improvements to green spaces; additional car parking for the Community Centre, and community consultation. In addition to this, the Masterplan seeks to secure and improve local shopping for Red Hall and the wider area.
34. The masterplan supports the ongoing project to improve access to employment for residents in partnership with the Morrison Trust and seeks to replicate the ongoing refurbishment of the houses, subject to gauging the success of these measures.

### **Enforcement Policy for Regulatory Services**

35. In order to promote consistent enforcement practices by providing a framework to guide the enforcement actions of the Council's authorised Officers, Cabinet approved the Enforcement Policy for Regulatory Services.
36. Enforcement Officers have a range of enforcement options available to them when contraventions are identified and the Enforcement Policy describes the decision making process that will be followed by Officers before taking action.

**Councillor Chris McEwan**  
**Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**