
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.

Rural Broadband Infrastructure Rollout within the Borough of Darlington

2. Cabinet noted the sequence and anticipated phasing of the publically funded Broadband infrastructure rollout for Superfast internet speeds (up to 25mb/sec) in the rural areas of the Borough.
3. The strategy for the future roll out has been developed with partners. Cabinet's endorsement was sought of the forward programme for Phase 3 (2017 to 2018) that is likely to be Hurworth and Middleton St George and Phase 3+ 2018 to 2020, Great Stainton, Sadberge, Houghton Le Side, Walworth and Denton.
4. The Council agreed in 2014 to support the BDUK Superfast Rollout Phase 2 programme with £50k. A match-funding commitment letter was forwarded to Digital Durham in August 2014 to commit the Council, in partnership with Digital Durham, to invest £50k subject to BDUK committing another £50k in Darlington. This money has been committed and is available for use.
5. Digital Durham has also advised the Council that the Phase 3 programme (2017 to 2018) could be financed with 'Gainshare', returns from Phase 1 of the BDUK programme based on two elements of British Telecom commercial return dependent on Broadband uptake and current programme savings to March 2016. The finance available through any 'Gainshare' is not yet finalised.

Blackwell Grange Planning and Design Brief for Site He4

6. Cabinet endorsed the Blackwell Planning and Design Brief for Site He4 in order to inform planning decisions for the site and the disposal of Council land.
7. The Planning and Design Brief was prepared in the context of existing Planning policies and followed a six week consultation on the Council's proposals for approximately 55 dwellings on Site He4.
8. The Brief was developed by a multi-disciplinary officer team with involvement from independent consultants, where necessary, and the Blackwell Neighbourhood Forum (BNF) following a thorough analysis of the area and in the light of a number of technical reports.

9. Neighbouring residents were also consulted during May and June on the Brief, which is in line with the adopted Core Strategy and the adopted Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document.
10. The Planning and Design Brief will be a material consideration in making decisions on planning applications and will guide the disposal of Council land. The current programme provided for the land to be marketed for sale in September 2016.

Appropriation of Land for Planning Purposes at Blackwell

11. Cabinet approved the appropriation of land at Blackwell, including parts of the former Blackwell Grange Golf Course, for residential development and in doing so declared the land surplus to requirements and authorised negotiations for its sale.
12. Appropriation is the statutory procedure to change the purpose for which land is held from one statutory purpose to another. By appropriating the sites for planning purposes, the Council will be able to secure their redevelopment and future use by relying on the statutory provisions relating to the redevelopment and disposal of land held for planning purposes.
13. These pockets of land at Blackwell are currently used as open land, mainly as a golf course by the Blackwell Grange Golf Club, a private members club.
14. The appropriation of the land for residential development will facilitate the restoration of the remaining open space to parkland, contribute to the improvement of the local economy by providing high quality dwellings, construction and domestic services jobs and allow public access to the remaining open space.

Uniform Upgrade

15. As part of the MTFP and service review, a significant upgrade of the ICT systems that are used to manage Planning Services has commenced with the upgrade of servers and installation of test systems. The timetable to operate the new systems live is scheduled for the turn of the year. The improved systems will not only generate much improved efficiencies but also enhance access and information services for both Members and the general public.

Development Management

16. Significant planning applications for housing (approximately 1400 dwellings) at West Park, Sherborne Close, Allington Way, Heron Drive, have received planning permission. Applications for the former Lancaster House and Durham Tees Valley Airport (DTVA) are currently being considered.
17. In addition, Planning Permission has been granted for the erection of a new Dunelm Retail Store at Yarm Road and two car show rooms are still under consideration at the former Torrington site.

18. Important work is also continuing with prospective developers to maintain a positive throughput of future submissions.
19. After a number of months negotiating with the applicants to secure satisfactory mitigation, planning permission was minded to be granted by the Planning Committee in August, for the construction of a multi-use games area including floodlights at Carmel RC School. The decision is dependent on the outcome of a referral to the Secretary of State.

Foundation for Jobs Update

20. From April to July Foundation for Jobs (FFJ) worked with 560 Darlington school pupils in projects linking them with industry or building their employability skills, taking the number assisted since 2012 to approximately 6,850.
21. Foundation for Jobs has secured £25,000 funding of the Royal Academy of Engineering.
22. Around 80 female pupils from Darlington secondary schools attended the joint Foundation for Jobs/Darlington College Women in Engineering and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) event in June. Companies taking part were :-
 - (a) Amec Foster Wheeler
 - (b) Modus Seabed Intervention
 - (c) Hydram of Chilton
 - (d) Go Ahead Training of Newton Aycliffe
 - (e) RTC North
 - (f) Darlington College
23. In July more than 120 pupils from Darlington's secondary schools attended a FFJ annual Ingenious Engineering event to participate in a range of practical activities delivered by engineering companies :-
 - (a) Cummins
 - (b) Modus Seabed Intervention
 - (c) Mech-Tool (MTE Ltd)
 - (d) Cleveland Bridge
 - (e) Darlington College
 - (f) Go Ahead Training
 - (g) A representative of the Engineering Development Trust
24. 200 pupils at Longfield Academy in Darlington spent four days with FFJ staff building mini underwater robot kits as part of activities designed to increase their understanding of the subsea sector, supported by Darlington based Modus Seabed Intervention.
25. FFJ, Darlington Cares and construction firm Keepmoat ran an employability scheme at St Aidan's Academy involving 30 pupils to improve CV and interview

skills.

2016 Air Quality Annual Status Report

26. The 2016 Air Quality Annual Status report for Darlington is available on the Council website and has been submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for approval. The report concludes that in areas where the public may be exposed, air quality in Darlington is generally good when compared with Air Quality Standards and there has been no need to declare any Air Quality Management Areas. The report this year has changed focus from reporting on air quality monitoring results to looking at local actions which may improve air quality such as sustainable transport, reducing traffic congestion and the promotion of low emission transport.

Food Allergens

27. Dr Banerjee, Consultant Paediatrician, Darlington Memorial Hospital (who specialises in allergy patients) recently completed a Master of Science Degree that related to the Food Allergen knowledge of caterers in Darlington. A major part of the study involved two Environmental Health Officers in Darlington who carried out awareness training and interviews using material provided by Dr Banerjee to determine the knowledge of caterers in relation to allergies. Dr Banerjee has been encouraged by Allergy UK to share the methodology of his project and extend his study. This was followed in July by a business awareness day focusing on Asian restaurants and food allergens which was very well received.

Darlington Business Summit

28. Darlington economy team held a business summit event on 18 July 2016 which was attended by over 60 businesses.
29. The event was made up of three presentations covering Tees Valley Combined Authorities revised Strategic Economic Plan, Darlington's Economic Strategy and the Darlington Local Plan. The focus for businesses was on what has been achieved in the last four years and what still needs to be done. Workshop sessions followed the presentations and allowed businesses the opportunity to identify what were the current priorities.
30. As a result of the workshops, businesses have identified the following three new priorities to be considered in any revised plans:
- (a) Develop mentoring for micro and small businesses to support growth and workforce development;
 - (b) New approach to retrain and up skill existing workforce and long term unemployed; and
 - (c) A strong focus on utilising empty, unused premises.

31. A summary of the workshop session's feedback along with the presentations was then sent to the original 90 businesses registered to attend the event and discussions are now ongoing with the Tees Valley Combined Authority on where some of these additional priorities could be included.

Healthy High Street Bid

32. Distinct Darlington and the Councils Economy Team worked together to submit a bid to Business in the Community's (BITC) healthy high street scheme. In July it was announced that the bid was successful and Darlington was in the latest 33 towns nationally to be added to this scheme.

33. The scheme is all about a more coordinated approach to supporting a town centre to thrive and provides the towns involved with a free consultancy and advice service to develop a dedicated action plan to tackle vacancy rates and footfall.

34. The first meeting with BITC to develop the action plan was held on 25 August 2016.

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Economy and Regeneration Portfolio