
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.

Library Service

2. In June, Council agreed a number of decisions about the library service including the relocation of the main town centre library from Crown Street to a purpose-built facility at the Dolphin Centre, as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
3. Since then, officers have continued to develop designs for how the service will look and meet the needs of current and future users. Work has also been underway looking at developing proposals for the Centre for Local studies. Further consultation on the details is also planned.
4. Further clarification has also been obtained on the legal status of the Crown Street building. The original documentation relating to the Crown Street Library was lost some years ago but a 1983 statutory declaration stated that part of the land was held subject to a covenant that it should be used as a library. Despite the existence of this document, and searches made, officers were unable to establish the existence of a covenant. Members were updated in June about the position and the possibility that the land may be held on a trust rather than being subject to a covenant, but at that time the position was unclear. On 21 July 2016 the Charities Commission advised that we should treat the Crown Street Library as being held on trust for the purposes of a public library.
5. This has implications for the way in which decisions about the Crown Street need to be taken. Any decision about the disposal of Crown Street is a matter for the Trustee of Crown Street and may in addition need the permission from the Charities Commission. The sole corporate trustee is Cabinet. It is now clear that the part of the June Council decision about the disposal of Crown Street building ought to have been considered by Cabinet as Trustee of the Crown Street building.
6. On the 12 August 2016 we received a pre action letter, from a legally funded person, threatening to challenge the decisions made by the Council in June by judicial review proceedings. The matter of particular concern was about the relocation of Crown Street Library to the Dolphin Centre.
7. While the legal challenge is defensible (we received advice from a specialist barrister to that effect), given the risks, expense and delay created by litigation and the developing situation since June, a more considered response is to continue the

development of the proposals for the Dolphin Centre, carry out further focussed consultation on the service in this location and then for a more detailed report to be presented to members. At the same time the Cabinet as Trustee can meet to consider the implications should the library service relocate to the Dolphin Centre and the future of the Crown Street building.

8. This is viewed as a more productive use of time and resources instead of putting energy into defending a Judicial Review and while those proceedings are live, being constrained to further progress any aspect of the decisions made in June.
9. This means that the decisions taken by Council on 29 June 2016 about the Library service will not be implemented. Library provision will continue as before the June decision (with the exception of the mobile Library Service, which will be suspended from 1 October 2016, as the decommissioning was too far advanced). Further new decisions about the library service as a whole, will need to be made and this will include the proposal to relocate the central library service from Crown Street to the Dolphin Centre.
10. The strategy that I have outlined was agreed to by Cabinet when it met to consider a report on the Library Service on the 13 September 2016.

Stonebridge Strengthening Works

11. This was completed ahead of schedule and was opened to traffic on 17 August 2016.

Central Park South Junction and Spine Road

12. The junction construction work is complete but will remain closed until the New Year to facilitate the works to construct a spine road and a car park associated with the National Biologics Centre.
13. The spine road site clearance and associated earthworks are substantially complete. The first 160 metres of the road corridor is constructed including drainage systems and service corridors. Embankments and verges are established and await their final finishes. It is anticipated that the first half of the spine road scheme will be largely complete in the coming weeks.
14. Phase 3 and final arrangements around Green Street are awaiting the relocation of a commercial premise. Once this building is vacated works will commence on the remaining section of spine road.

Beaumont Street and Feethams Improvements

15. There have been a number of highway improvements around the Beaumont Street/Feethams area to complement investment in that area. We have completed a level access scheme from the Feethams car park to the market square, provision of improved crossing points at Feethams/Beaumont Street junction and the

implementation of a one-way system around Beaumont Street.

16. Works will start on Houndgate in October 2016. This will involve the creation of a layby for loading to the rear of the Dolphin Centre. This is being provided to assist local businesses and to avoid vehicles parking part on the footway, which has been a source of complaints from Darlington Association for Disability (DAD). There will also be some associated footway improvements on Houndgate and Feethams.
17. Houndgate will be resurfaced from Blackwellgate to Feethams. This will take up to two weeks and will require the road to be closed due to the requirement for safe working. A temporary traffic management system will be in place and this will affect some of the one-way routing around Beaumont Street and a temporary egress arrangement for the Feethams car park will be required.

John Street

18. Work has commenced on the John Street cycle path. The path will run along the river Skerne from North Road Station to the Town Centre. The cycle path is a key piece of the Town's cycle network. The proposed route will comprise a 450 metre section adjacent to the River Skerne and a 90 metre link up to High Northgate and will take around three months to build.
19. The project will open up an important historic asset in the story of Darlington as it will run underneath the 1825 Skerne Bridge designed by Ignatious Bonomi. The bridge, also known as the £5 note bridge, is the oldest working railway bridge in the world and is a nationally designated scheduled monument.

Park Place West Car Park

20. A scheme to improve Park Place West car park commenced in August 2016 and is programmed to last up to ten weeks. As part of the scheme, the car park will be completely resurfaced and a new circulatory arrangement will be introduced. A new drainage system will also be provided to address the drainage issues that were evident in the old car park.

Feethams Development

21. As part of the ongoing Town Centre strategy, the Feethams area has seen massive transformation. The Department for Education has relocated into the Town Centre, the Feethams leisure has opened and the multi-storey car park has opened to serve both the town centre and new developments.
22. As part of the overall strategy for the area, a green park environment is planned for the area along the side of Skerne in front of the Department for Education building. This will create a much improved environment walkways, seating and landscaping to improve the town centre environment. This will improve the link from the railway station to the town centre and link into the walkways already provided as part of Feethams Leisure development.

23. Funding for the capital cost of the scheme comes directly from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) as a result of money it received from the Feethams development and from Government. The HCA has said that this money can only be spent on the riverside parkland scheme.

Highway Maintenance Schemes

24. Recently completed scheme :-

- (a) Minors Crescent – Patching prior to Carriageway Micro Asphalt
- (b) Witton Crescent - Patching prior to Carriageway Micro Asphalt
- (c) A167 Croft Road Phase 5 – Carriageway Resurfacing
- (d) Church Lane Middleton St George – Channels and Patching prior to Carriageway Micro Asphalt
- (e) Alliance Street/Otley Terrace/Ann’s Terrace – Carriageway Resurfacing
- (f) A1150 Stockton Road – Inbound Duals Carriageway Resurfacing
- (g) A167 North Road – Carriageway Patching Scheme
- (h) Hopelands, Heighington – Carriageway Resurfacing
- (i) Roundhill Road/West End/The Green, Hurworth – Carriageway Resurfacing

25. Ongoing schemes :-

- (a) Footway Micro Asphalt Surfacing Contract 2016
- (b) Carriageway Micro Asphalt Surfacing Contract 2016

26. Schemes due to start :-

- (a) A67 – Sadberge Road, Mill Lane and Airport and A6072 School Aycliffe Lane – Roundabout Carriageway Retexturing
- (b) Gladstone St Ph2 - Carriageway Resurfacing
- (c) McMullen Rd - Carriageway Resurfacing

Blackwell Meadows Community Sports Hub Expansion

27. We received a progress report on the Blackwell Meadows Community Sports Hub expansion and gave consideration to the necessary authorisations to progress the Council’s contribution to improve the car parking facilities.

28. The Blackwell Meadows Community Sports Hub is an important sporting infrastructure in the Borough and is one of the hub sites identified in the recent Darlington Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy. The project supports the three key themes of the strategy that sport facilities are fit for purpose, have a high level of user and resident satisfaction and that access to existing facilities is maximised.

29. A detailed car park specification and design has been produced to meet the requirements of the site and Members also discussed potential parking issues on match days once the Darlington Football Club moved to the site.

Eastbourne Sports Complex Redevelopment

30. Work is well underway on the £500K redevelopment of the Artificial Grass Pitch at Eastbourne Sports Complex. The scheme, which is funded through a £412K grant from the Football Foundation, will ensure that Middleton Rangers and Darlington Youth Junior Football Clubs, as well as Darlington 1883 FC, have state of the art training and playing bases. There will be a strong focus on both girls and disability football within the programme going forward. The pitch is due to open in mid-September in time for the start of the new junior season.

Move More Disability Sport Project

31. The Disability Sport Project is now sustainable with 39 individuals and 419 attendances in the last four months. Following a recent review and close monitoring of the sessions, the Move More Team are working with local day centres such as Foundations, Lakeside Lodge and The Links. Five weekly sessions continue to run with participants taking part in a variety of sports, including: Tri-Golf, Boccia, Table Tennis and Trampoline.
32. On 10 July 2016, the team supported Darlington Rotary Club in the Northern Games for People with Disabilities at Eston Leisure Centre. This included delivering the Sitting Volleyball event and coaching 15 participants from across the region.
33. The Team also attended the IncludFEST on 24 July in South Park and provided multi skills activities alongside Boxercise. Strong links have been established with the Gateway Wheelers Disability Cycling Club, which will further develop a satellite session at Eastbourne Sports Complex.

Change 4Life Celebration Event

34. A Change 4Life Celebration Event was delivered at Eastbourne Sports Complex as part of the school games. This engaged around 150 children from 11 primary schools in Darlington who take part in weekly Change 4 Life Clubs, targeting less active children.

Darlington School and Community Games 2016

35. The Sports Development Team engaged 23 local primary Schools in the 2016 Darlington School and Community Games in the last week of the school term. A range of sports and physical activities were on offer, including; Boccia, New Age Kurling, Archery, Tennis, Athletics, Football, Golf, Rugby, Cricket, Street Swords, Rounders, and Netball. In total, over 500 children were on site at Eastbourne Sports Complex. The Event was supported by Northumbrian Water and Sainsbury's.

Playmaker Award Day

36. The Playmaker Award Day delivered at Eastbourne Sports Complex engaged over 110 primary children in a leadership award. All children received a nationally recognised award for leadership on completion of this day.

Community Carnival

37. This year's Community Carnival, which celebrated its 34th year, was held on 25 June 2016 and was based on the theme 'Endangered Species'. It attracted well over 400 participants from local schools, dance schools, voluntary organisations and professional street performers.
38. The parade route started in the Market Square and finished at Stanhope Park where there were lots of family activities, as well as the Forum Music Stage and a record number of charity stalls raising money for good causes.

Proms in the Park

39. This year's Proms in the Park coincided with Armed Forces Day and was held in the South Park bandstand on 26 June 2016. The event was jointly organised by the Northern Military Music and the Events Team. Modus Seabed Intervention sponsored the event for the fourth year running.
40. Hundreds of people flocked to South Park to enjoy a fabulous programme of musical entertainment throughout the afternoon. The program included: The Royal Signals (Northern Band), 102 Battalion REME Pipes and Drums, Central and East Yorkshire Wing ATC Section 1 Band and guest vocalists. Members of Stagecoach performed during the event to add a family and young person's element to the event which was greatly appreciated by the audience. Around £1000 was collected for the Army Benevolent Fund on the day.

Darlington Dance Festival

41. Darlington Dance Festival Association held its sixth Mass Dance on 2 July in the Market Square along with professional performances. Approximately 600 dancers performed the mass dance which was choreographed by Darrien Wright and Debbie Waistell. Hundreds of spectators gathered round the arena to enjoy an afternoon of dance and workshops in the sunshine.

Our Big Gig

42. Following the success of last year's Big Gig in South Park which was jointly organised by Durham Music Services and the Events Team, it was decided to support a similar event in 2016 which would be predominately performed by young people.
43. Hundreds attended a sunny afternoon of musical entertainment on 3 July 2016 which included; Darlington Little Big Band, South Regional Youth Wind Band,

Darlington District Wind Band and Durham County Big Band.

Darlington Cycle Rides

44. The annual 70 mile ride (3 July) and the Castle Ride (31 July) engaged over 190 cyclists over the two rides. All in preparation for the main 100 mile Hell of the North Ride in September.

Darlington Sherwoods Vauxhall 10K

45. The Darlington 10K Road Race which was held on 7 August 2016 is firmly established as one of the strongest races in the region with a great entry once again this year. Over 1800 participated in the highly regarded run with many commenting on it being the best so far; with regard to organisation and support from local residents around the route and in the Town Centre.
46. The junior 3km run supported by NHS Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group for a five year period is in its 2nd year and had over 180 eight to fourteen year olds running, numbers are up on last year's entries. There was a trophy for the overall winner and medals for sex/age categories. The Family Fun Run also exceeded previous entry levels with over 100 people participating on the start line.

Darlington by the Sea

47. This popular Family Event, with its traditional 40 tonnes of sand and family entertainment, a Stilt Walker and other themed street theatre, returned over three days (12 and 14 August 2016) in the School Summer holidays. The Sports Development Team added to the Healthy Darlington theme with a huge array of have-a-go sporting activities for children.

Civic Theatre

48. The Senior ArtsSpark Youth Theatre and leaders attended the Whatabout Youth Theatre Festival, held over three days in July in Northamptonshire. It was an exciting opportunity for the theatre's young people to take part in workshops and performances alongside youth theatre groups from all over the country.
49. On 9 July 2016, the annual ArtsSpark showcase was at Hummersknott Academy, where the young people's courses are being held until the theatre reopens. There was an audience of 238 people and the event was very well received.
50. The Civic Theatre has become a partner in Head, Heart, Hands Darlington, a project created by Blue Cabin Director, Jenny Young, which has been supported using public funding provided by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and the support of Darlington Borough Council, Creative Darlington and other arts and cultural organisations and venues across Darlington. This project aims to create an arts and cultural strategy for looked after children and the adults in their lives. As a result, artists will develop the quality of their practice resulting in increased engagement; organisations will develop their audience and participation

strategies, delivery models and artistic practice; target groups will be supported to access art and culture as audience members and participants and report improved engagement, well-being and participation. An evaluation will be shared regionally and nationally.

51. Auditions took place in Darlington in July and August to find a large community cast for a production by the Civic Theatre and the Touring Consortium Theatre Company of *A Tale of Two Cities*, which will be presented in the Central Hall, Dolphin Centre in November. In early September, a cast of approximately 36 took part in training and rehearsals with a professional team of directors and designers. Specially designed costumes were crafted by a team of volunteer costume creators and there were opportunities for students to assist in stage management. This production is part of a series of events taking place around the town which is being created by the Civic Theatre team to celebrate the connection of Charles Dickens to Darlington and to the world of theatre. The Theatre is being partnered by the Dickens Museum in Darlington in this project.
52. Interest in the restoration of the Civic Theatre and the creation of The Hullaballoon is being sustained with a series of hard hat tours on site. A special tour for the local media has generated some excellent coverage and all of the tours currently on offer are sold out. Further tours will take place as the project progresses.

Creative Darlington

53. Creative Darlington will meet with Tin Arts, Tees Valley Community Foundation and Stockton Borough Council to discuss opportunities for greater Tees Valley community engagement within IncludFEST Tees Valley 2017, which is expected to be staged in South Park, as per IncludFEST Darlington in 2015 and IncludFEST Tees Valley in 2016. IncludFEST Tees Valley 2016 was supported by Council strategic arts budget, the County Durham Community Foundation and local business, with support in kind from Healthy Darlington, Darlington's events service and Darlington for Culture. IncludFEST Tees Valley has the potential to grow here without a requirement for significant infrastructure budget.
54. Creative Darlington has worked with the County Durham Community Foundation and Darlington Society of Arts to develop new criteria for the Dover Art Prize, which is administered by the County Durham Community Foundation. The revised scheme was promoted via a press launch in July 2016 at the Bridge Centre for Visual Arts. The new scheme will involve a panel, including representation from County Durham Community Foundation, Darlington Society of Arts, Arts Council England, Darlington Borough Council and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) in making a single award to support the research and development of new visual arts activity which will be premiered in Darlington. The County Durham Community Foundation has allocated additional budget to support the new scheme.

Audience Development

55. Creative Darlington supported a performance by the National Youth Jazz Orchestra and Durham County Youth Big Band on 4 July 2016 in Central Hall. Creative Darlington has supported the growth of Darlington Jazz Club and Darlington Jazz Festival in recent years and these parties have secured Grants for the Arts Awards from Arts Council England in 2015 and 2016 for activity in Darlington.

Head of Steam

56. The Museum received confirmation of success with the Sandford Award for Heritage Education. This is a national scheme based on the submission of a detailed account of our educational activities and facilities and also an inspection of a school workshop. There is a series of standards to meet. The inspector gives a little feedback and asks questions before submitting a report to the Directors of the Heritage Education Trust for their approval.
57. In July, there was a preview and launch of a commissioned piece by Cath Campbell as part of the Arts and Heritage Meeting Point Project, funded by Arts Council England. The piece is called 'Since the Middle Summers Spring' and the preview was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress. The fee for this was paid for through our involvement in the Making a Mark project, funded by ACE and led in the Tees Valley by Kirkleatham Museum.
58. 'Safe and Sound' a new collaborative exhibition opened on 9 July 2016. The exhibition is the culmination a two year partnership between museums in the Tees Valley and tells the history of emergency services in the area.

The Summer Reading Challenge

59. The Summer Reading Challenge began in Darlington on 16 July 2016. This year there was a Roald Dahl theme to celebrate 100 years of the author. The Big Friendly Read was open to all children aged between four and eleven years of age. To complete the challenge they needed to visit one of our three libraries on three separate occasions during the holidays and borrow books. Along the way they received Roald Dahl themed incentives such as scratch and sniff cards and wacky rainbow glasses. On completion, they received a Gold ticket which will give them free entry in to one of our October Half Term events, either the Cute and Fluffy animal show or the Feathery Friends falconry show.
60. Darlington Libraries Summer Activity Programme had events planned for almost every day of the week, with most events being fully booked within days of the launch. Events included: Hilarity Bites Kids Comedy, Sensory Play Story and Craft sessions, Baby Prints Pottery Painting, Science workshops, Animal Encounters and Roald Dahl themed interactive performances.
61. In July, the Library Service, working in partnership with Darlington Building Society, hosted an author event at Cockerton Library. Three local crime writers, Eileen Wharton, Sheila Quigley and Kerry Richardson, discussed their novels, their knowledge of crime scene investigation and gave advice to aspiring writers.

Centre for Local Studies

62. The 'Darlington Time Traveller' display of merged past and present photographs by local photographer Peter Giroux interested a lot of customers and led onto a number of enquiries. There were some lively discussions about how streets in the Town have changed and engagement with new audiences. Also on show was a large oil painting commemorating World War 1 by artist John Pallister.

Markets

63. August saw the return of the Summer Markets, which began with the Tea Dance on 11 August 2016. The four day market event continued with Darlington by The Sea in the Market Square.
64. The 14 August brought a motor cycle rally to West Row where hundreds of bikers joined the event, which was in aid of the children's 'Make a Wish' charity. The Mayor attended to present prizes for the five categories in the competition. In addition to the regular market traders on Saturdays, there were 18 extra traders over the four days. Live music and entertainment continued throughout the event and luckily the rain stayed off, unlike last year.

Environmental Services

65. Members will be aware of the forthcoming significant cuts to the Council's Street Cleansing Service. Staff are currently changing frequencies and trialling different methods of service, to determine the best way of providing a satisfactory service with significantly reduced resources.
66. They will also be working on grounds maintenance schedules over the winter months to ensure a satisfactory service can be delivered. The Council are ready for the winter maintenance season, with staff on standby from week commencing 3 October 2016. The Council has 5500 tonnes of salt in stock ready to treat the roads as and when required.
67. Officers are currently working on a resource pack to assist Members when they are working on litter and grounds maintenance related projects. This work is in response to the medium term financial plan and we will be rolling out a Member-led approach to Community Engagement with regard to litter picking and, where appropriate, maintaining open spaces. Also as part of the new arrangements, Officers are working closely with Durham Wildlife Trust and the Probation Service with a view to the Trust taking on responsibility for a number of local nature reserves.

68. In relation to this season, no issues have arisen to date around grass cutting. Some of the wild flower areas planted for the first time this season have not delivered the quality of show as expected and Officers are working with contractors on this issue for forthcoming years.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio