
LEADER'S OVERVIEW

Regional and Tees Valley Updates

1. The Tees Valley Combined Authority Board met on 14 January 2017. Unanimous agreement was given to the draft statutory instruments, which are the final steps to the Authority taking on new powers, funding and responsibilities. All five Tees Valley Authorities, including Darlington (Council on 24 November 2016 and Cabinet on 25 November 2016), had already given in-principle agreement to the draft Orders. The powers devolved will enable the area to take responsibility for decisions previously made in Whitehall and Westminster, including:-
 - (a) new powers over transport, including influence over road, rail and bus services and infrastructure;
 - (b) control and funding for adult skills and employment training; and
 - (c) devolved responsibility for a long-term programme of investment.
2. The Orders also establish the governance arrangements for the Tees Valley Combined Authority, allow for the establishment of Mayoral Development Corporations. After the Mayor election which takes place on 4 May 2016, the authority will be chaired by the Tees Valley's directly elected Mayor.
3. The Board considered a report on recent Government announcements of relevance to the Tees Valley. **This is attached.** It is worth noting that in respect of strategic transport matters, the Tees Valley secured two of twelve national funding awards to further our priorities, and David Brown, the Chief Executive of Transport for the North has recently praised our clear priorities and determination to realise them.
4. The Board also received important reports on education and skills, and Board members were clear that improving the aspirations, attainment and skills of the Tees Valley workforce is crucial to achieving sustainable growth.
5. Members of Council are reminded that Board papers can be read on <https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/>

Tees Valley Transport

6. On 30 November the Tees Valley Combined Authority launched '[Connecting the Tees Valley](#)', the framework for the Strategic Transport Plan, which is due for publication during Summer 2017.

7. The Framework sets out the region's transport priorities up to 2026 and offers the opportunity for stakeholders, interest groups and the public to help inform the development of the Strategic Transport Plan. As outlined within the Strategic Economic Plan, over the next ten years the Combined Authority wants to create 25,000 new jobs and build 22,000 new homes and the Strategic Transport Plan is vital to support this aim.
8. The Combined Authority's transport vision for the Tees Valley is 'to provide a high quality, quick, affordable, reliable and safe transport network for people and freight to move within, to and from the Tees Valley'.
9. The consultation is open until 31 January 2017 and Members can access the Strategy on the link above.
10. The Autumn Statement announced some positive news on the Tees Valley's Strategic Road Priorities. Development Funding was announced to progress option development for both priorities, which are:-
 - (a) the A66 East West Connections Project which looks to improve strategic road connectivity between the A1(M) and Teesport; and
 - (b) the A19 Tees Crossing which looks to address capacity and resilience issues on the A19 travelling north-south through the Tees Valley.
11. Sir David Higgins, Chairman of HS2 Limited launched his latest report 'Changing Britain: HS2 Taking Root' featuring Darlington and the Tees Valley's ambitions to maximise the benefits of HS2 arriving in Darlington. There is on-going work to influence Network Rail Investment Plans and Transport for the North's Northern Powerhouse Rail agenda for their next investment periods.

Housing

12. The Right Honourable Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government visited Central Park as part of a visit to the Tees Valley on 1 December 2016. The Secretary of State met with residents who had benefitted from the 'Help to Buy' Scheme, an apprentice joiner working on Central Park and discussed other strategic housing opportunities in Darlington. He also had a meeting with the Board of the Combined Authority.

Rail North Board

13. I attended a Rail North Board meeting in December where the Initial Industry Advice into the Investment Planning process for Network Rail was considered. Rail North continue to promote further investment in the rail network across the North of England. The key issue for the Tees Valley was to ensure Darlington Station was included in the report, which it was. The national funding picture for rail investment is more challenging than expected when this process started, which will mean an extremely competitive process for the funding that remains available. Darlington Station is recognised by Network Rail as requiring investment in the future for operational reasons and the requirement to be ready for HS2. The Tees Valley continues to press for the schemes inclusion in next investment programmes.

Cabinet

14. Cabinet at its meeting held on 13 December 2016 agreed the 2017/18 budget, for consultation, including a Council Tax increase of 1.99 per cent plus a two per cent precept to help fund Adult Social Care in 2017/18. Following the receipt of the Local Government Finance settlement on 15 December 2016, the Government acknowledged the challenges faced by adult social care and allowed Councils to increase the precept to fund Adult Social Care by a further 1% , making a 3% social care precept in total for two years. This was agreed by Cabinet at its meeting held on 17 January 2017. On completion of the consultation period the final budget will be considered and approved by special meetings of Cabinet and Council in February 2017.

General Updates

15. On 2 December 2016 I attended the annual visit to Royal Mail Sorting Office, Darlington, to see the hard working employees who ensure that letters, cards and parcels are delivered on time during the festive period.

One Darlington Partnership

16. I attended the One Darlington Partnership Board on 9 November 2016 and 11 January 2017. The Strategy for Culture and Visitor Strategy were the main focus for both meetings. The discussion which followed indicated strong support for both and provided some valuable commentary and practical ideas.
17. The Partnership has opened nominations for the Best of Darlington Awards which, as in previous years, pays tribute to those individuals, teams and organisations whose outstanding contributions continue to make Darlington a great place to live, work and do business.
18. I would urge Councillors to submit nominations and encourage others to do so so that those deserving recognition can be considered. Nominations can be made by visiting www.onedarlington.org.uk/best-of-darlington, collecting a nomination form from the Town Hall Customer Service Centre or by contacting 01325 406420 to have one posted to you.

19. The Partnership has organised a Volunteering Fair on 2 February which will highlight many of the opportunities there are to make a difference.

Community Safety

20. The Darlington Community Safety Partnership Board met on 30 November 2016. The Board is chaired by Chief Superintendent Adrian Green. Issues discussed included tackling domestic abuse, feedback from the Safeguarding Boards and the County Durham and Darlington Hate Crime Action Group.

21. When the DAAT Board was stood down as part of the MTFP, I made a commitment that we would still have an opportunity to meet with partners to discuss drug and alcohol issues affecting our Borough. A Substance Misuse Forum met on 22 December 2016 to share information and action plans. Those issues will be fed back to the Community Safety Partnership Board.

**Bill Dixon,
Leader**