
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.

Economy Team

2. Teesside University's Digital High Street programme and 'pop-up shop' in the Cornmill Centre concluded in April as planned, after running for three months. The programme used European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to deliver business support and consultancy to Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) around up-skilling digital skills to improve sales and footfall. A total of 18 businesses signed up to the programme, many of which have been Darlington Town Centre independent retailers.
3. An Officer attended the Multimodal Expo at the Birmingham NEC in conjunction with Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), aimed at generating new inward investment leads. Pre work identified target clients and leads were picked up on the day:
 - (a) Number spoke to on the day: 16; and
 - (b) Number of leads generated: five (two of which include organisations which are looking to establish a UK presence – Polish based).
4. The Team continues to seek new investment leads through a proactive approach to business engagement with strategic/key employers. Some of the company visits for this period have included:-
 - (a) Cosentino- a foreign owned multinational with a turnover of £8m;
 - (b) Magnet (Nobia Group – foreign owned); and
 - (c) JLM Global Foods (manufacturer and supplier of corn snacks to all major super market chains).
5. Foundation For Jobs (FFJ) has been made a conditional offer of £100k from the Careers and Enterprise Company on the back of a joint bid with Redcar and Cleveland Council. The award is significantly less than was applied for, but will however allow for the continuation of delivery of the FFJ programme, subject to agreeing terms and outputs with the Careers and Enterprise Company.

6. In addition, the team are continuing to work closely with a pool of intermediaries and the Combined Authority to drive forward enquiries from the logistics and warehousing sectors.
7. A recruitment fair was delivered by the team on 30 March at the Dolphin Centre:-
 - (a) 487 people attended throughout the day, 80 per cent (390) of which were Darlington residents;
 - (b) 15 Businesses took a stand, recruiting for over 360 live vacancies (340 Darlington based), including EE, Student Loans Company, Beanies, First Point Homecare and Arriva;
 - (c) The businesses were from a range of sectors including hospitality, healthcare, engineering, manufacturing, logistics, business and financial services and public sector; and
 - (d) Seven support organisations also attended including Job Centre Plus and Morrison Trust.

Development Management

8. The Planning Applications Committee granted planning permission for 350 houses and a local centre at Durham Tees Valley Airport (DTVA). A planning application is currently being considered for Lancaster House, also at Middleton St George. Planning permission for ten houses has also been granted in Neasham subject to financial contributions relating to Affordable Housing, Education and Sustainable Transport
9. Further progress has been made in upgrading the ICT systems that support the planning service and Uniform Version 10 went live at the end of February. This will significantly improve the efficiency of the service and performance management. The next phase is to develop the Public Access features that will realise significant benefits for the public and Members. It is anticipated this will be complete by the Summer and a demonstration will be organised for Members in due course.

Local Plan Progress

10. Master Plan Progress Meetings have been held and negotiations are advancing for Skerningham and Greater Faverdale areas. Master Plan Groups are reporting back on project plans, providing engagement strategies and commissioning consultants for the Master planning framework.
11. At the previous Council meeting, I reported on the process for considering development options in Middleton St George. I can now confirm that this process has commenced in relation to Heighington. Meetings have been held with developers and landowners who are promoting further development at Heighington. A meeting has also been held with Heighington Parish Council. It is proposed to have a joint meeting with the Parish Council, local Members, the Headteacher from Heighington Primary School and potentially Durham County Council, who are the

neighbouring authority, to take this forward.

Investment and Funding

12. The Council has secured £110k of One Public Estate funding for the Town Centre Fringe to examine feasibility and business case development.
13. The Council has secured £250k Estates Regeneration Funding for feasibility and community engagement work for Red Hall.
14. TVCA has opened up a call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) to the Tees Valley Investment Fund. EOIs had to be submitted by 30 April 2017. Future calls for EOIs will be on a quarterly basis and Officers are in the process of drafting EOIs.
15. The Council was unsuccessful in its bid for funding for Homes and Communities Agency capacity funding.

Town Centre Conference

16. The Town Centre Conference, held on 21 March 2017 at Central Hall was attended by around 70 delegates and was an opportunity for traders, businesses and partners to discuss the future of the Darlington's Town Centre. Following a stimulating and inspiring set of talks from the Combined Authority, Digital City and Revo there were a series of workshops held around the themes of Retail Futures, Leisure Prospects, Arts, Culture and Tourism, Digital Opportunities, Housing and Access and the previous Town Centre Action Plan. Across the workshop themes there were a number of cross-cutting issues identified. These have been summarised and can be found at <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/town-centre/town-centre-conference/>

Private Sector Housing

Gas Central Heating Project

17. The Central Heating Project was completed on 31 March 2017. This was a £6.5 million project funded by a Government Grant, led by Northumberland County Council as part of the Warm Up North Project. The funding targeted residents living in 'off gas areas' or those living in 'on gas areas' where a gas supply was not installed. Gas heating, oil heating and air source heat pumps were available depending upon assessment needs. A total of 1419 central heating systems were installed across the region including 80 installations in Darlington.
18. The funding attracted to Darlington was £270,000 representing a real investment in the Borough to reduce fuel poverty levels and improve the quality and lives of residents who have received free central heating systems. The majority of the installations in Darlington took residents off expensive to run electric heating systems and replaced them with more affordable gas central heating systems. In addition, only limited Officer time was spent on the project with no other Council funding necessary. Residents have highlighted how happy they are with their new

central heating systems.

Trading Standards

19. Trading Standards continues to prioritise enforcement action against illegal tobacco sellers operating within the Borough. On 9 March 2017, as a result of information received from a member of the public, Trading Standards working in partnership with Durham Police's Harm Reduction Unit, targeted a vehicle that was being used to store illegal tobacco products. 16,850 Cigarettes and 4.45kg of hand rolling tobacco were subsequently seized. Investigations are ongoing.
20. As part of Trading Standards continued focus on offering support to local businesses, a member of the team gave a presentation to a meeting of the Darlington Business Club on 6 April 2017 on how to avoid becoming a victim of business scams.

Regeneration Projects

Central Park

21. Business Central continues to operate successfully, with occupancy set to be over 75 per cent by the end of July 2017, with 40 businesses occupying space and a further 21 businesses using the virtual/touch down facilities.
22. The Centre for Process Innovation (CPI) continues to work up its proposal for Healthcare Futures Centre, with a planning application due to be determined in mid May 2017 and works scheduled to commence in Autumn 2017. Teesside University is also working up its proposed National Horizons Centre scheme with a planning submission anticipated in Summer 2017 and development scheduled to commence late 2017/early 2018, both buildings are also set to be operational in Spring 2019.
23. Works on the infrastructure and car park continue and are scheduled to be complete by the end of June 2017, following which eight development plots will be available to market.

Riverside

24. Works continue on the delivery of the Riverside Park and are scheduled to be complete in Summer.

Councillor Chris McEwan
Economy and Regeneration Portfolio