
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.

Economic Strategy Performance Indicators

2. Employment rate is 74.9 per cent - above both the North East (70.4 per cent) and national averages (74 per cent).
3. Unemployment is at 6.3 per cent or 3,400 residents, this has reduced at a faster rate (-4.2 per cent) than the national level since 2012 (-3.1 per cent) but still above the national average of 4.8 per cent.
4. Darlington currently has 3,100 businesses with 52,000 jobs, since 2012 Darlington businesses have created an additional 4,000 jobs.
5. Darlington's economy gross value added (GVA) grew by 5.8 per cent between 2014 and 2015, this is seventh highest percentage growth nationally of 228 areas.
6. Darlington's GVA per head is now £24,585 increasing by £1,331 (2014 data), since 2012 Darlington's GVA has grown by 10.7 per cent, considerably faster than the national trend of 7 per cent.
7. In 2015 Darlington businesses contributed £2.591 billion to national economy, rising from 2014 by £141 million.

Economy Team Update

8. Since the last portfolio report the team have worked on eleven new projects.
9. Twelve external searches of our sites and property website have been carried out by seven individuals and six of these have now become 'projects'.

Darlington Business Week

10. The Council's economy team are organising a Darlington Business Week to take place between 18 and 22 September and this culminates in the Festival of Ingenuity on the 22 and 23 September. The premise of the week is to pull together a range of events, workshops and networking opportunities to support existing Darlington Businesses to grow, as well as promote Darlington as a fantastic business location.

11. There are a number of events scheduled including a Chamber exchange on 21 September at Rockliffe Hall together with a series of workshops on marketing your business, commercial law and social media. There will also be a number of pop up shops across the week located at Bank Top Railway Station. A timetable of events for the week is currently being compiled.

Investment and Funding Team

12. A bid has been submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency for £256,000 Affordable Homes Programme grant for eight flats on Jedburgh Drive and a second bid for Affordable Homes Programme £256,000 grant is to be submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency for eight houses on the site of the former Jack Horner public house on Whitby Way.
13. Expressions of interest have been submitted to Tees Valley Combined Authority Investment Fund for the following six projects:
 - (a) Ingenium Parc/Salter's Lane (£1.6m loan to add to the £2.2m grant secured subject to due diligence);
 - (b) Feethams Offices (£480k development funding);
 - (c) Faverdale (£220k development funding);
 - (d) Central Park (£12m loan/grant);
 - (e) Bank Top Railway Station (£300k development funding); and
 - (f) Morton Palms Business Park Car Park (£150k grant/£150k loan).
14. An outline application has been submitted to Department for Communities and Local Government for £2.2m European Regional Development Fund grant to support the Feethams Offices project. Following appraisal of the outline application, the Council has been invited to submit a full application.

Local Plan Progress

15. David Hand has been appointed as Place Policy Manager with a brief to support and maintain progress on the Local Plan. He commenced his appointment on 30 May 2017.

16. A meeting of the Local Plan Steering Group took place on 21 June. Organisations represented on that group are The Homes and Community Agency, Highways England, Tees Valley Combined Authority, the Homes Builders Federation and ATLAS, the governments agency advising on major development issues. The Members Panel were also present. The group heard about progress on the plan and gave feedback on the work emerging from the Climate Change and Energy group and the health and Wellbeing Group. The Steering Group will meet again in September when much of the evidence base is anticipated to be completed.
17. Master Plan Progress Meetings have been held and discussions are advancing for Skerningham and Greater Faverdale areas. Master Plan Groups are reporting back on project plans, developing engagement strategies and commissioning consultants for the Master planning framework. Work has started on both sites to develop the evidence base for the Masterplan frameworks.

Development Management

18. The Planning Applications Committee granted planning permission for nine dwellings at Cobby Castle Lane Bishopton, subject to Section 106 Agreement, and three dwellings to the rear of Roundhill Road, Hurworth.
19. Key applications being considered include:
 - (a) Outline planning permission for 370 houses at Coatham Mundeville 15/00804/OUT;
 - (b) Outline planning permission for up to 380 houses at Burtree Lane 15/01050/OUT;
 - (c) Outline planning permission for up to 55 dwellings at Lancaster House, Durham Tees Valley Airport, 16/00396/OUT;
 - (d) Full planning permission for 43 houses at Heighington 16/00820/FUL;
 - (e) Outline planning permission for up to 226 houses Station Road, Middleton St George 16/00976/OUT;
 - (f) Outline planning permission for 280 houses at Lingfield Point 16/00985/OUT;
 - (g) Outline planning permission for 33 houses at Low Coniscliffe 16/01231/FUL;
 - (h) Full planning permission for 20 houses at Woodland Road, Cockerton 17/00237/FUL;
 - (i) Full planning permission for 101 houses at School Aycliffe 17/00283/FUL; and
 - (j) Full planning permission for 25 houses at Sadberge 17/00358/FUL.

20. Further progress has been made in upgrading the ICT systems that support the planning service. The Idox 1App connector went live on 1 June 2017 to automatically create cases in the Uniform system when customers submit applications through the Planning Portal. Following a significant amount of data cleansing work on the planning data we are now utilising the Auto Constraint checking features, which is already improving the efficiency of the service and performance management improvements will follow. The Public Access software is still targeted for completion in the summer and that will realise significant benefits for the public and Members.

Historic England Heritage Champions

21. On 17 July Darlington was the host for the Historic England Heritage Champions event for elected members from across the North East Region. Recognising Darlington's pivotal role in the development of the North East as a global historic powerhouse this conference looked ahead to the future based on this proud heritage. This event was an opportunity for Heritage Champions across the region to share best practice and build alliances.

Sockburn Hall

22. Sockburn Hall has been restored by its current owner and is no longer classed as 'At Risk'. Despite considerable challenges and a significant conservation deficit the Hall has been safeguarded in just 18 months. Restoration work will be completed over the summer. This exceptional significant Grade II* listed building, which was close to collapse in places, will be formally removed from the Heritage At Risk register by Historic England in October. The Built and Natural Environment Team has nominated the project for a Historic England Angel Award due to the passion and perseverance of those involved and the partnership that developed with the Council's Historic Assets Officer during the restoration. This partnership ensured the Hall was restored appropriately for its exceptional architectural and historic significance.

Regulatory Services

Trading Standards

23. Animal feed is an integral part of the food chain because it has an impact on the composition and quality of livestock products (meat, milk and eggs) that people consume. The Council, is an animal feed enforcement authority and its key duties are to help protect consumer and animal health and to ensure those buying animal feed have sufficient and accurate information to allow them to make informed choices.
24. The Trading Standards Animal Health Team carried out a project to test purchase and analyse animal feed that is on retail sale within the Borough. Thirty eight Tests, tailored to the type of animal feed and ingredients declared, were conducted over six samples. The labelling of each sample was also checked for legal compliance and took account of any descriptive claims made. The tests and

checks were carried out by the Agricultural Analyst at West Yorkshire Analytical Services. In four of the six samples, the labelling was not satisfactory and unreferenced genetically modified DNA was present in one sample.

25. The Trading Standards Animal Health Team is working with Regulatory Services colleagues in Primary or Home Authorities that cover the animal feed manufacturers, suppliers and/or retailers to ensure that non-compliant animal feed is made compliant.

Environmental Health

26. After complaints from members of the public, Environmental Health served a Community Protection Notice (CPN) in May 2017 on the company which owns the land behind Darlington Hippodrome and to the south of Brunswick Street close to the Town Centre. The land was subject to large amounts of fly tipping and a disused former garage on the land was being used as a place to take illegal drugs.
27. After serving the CPN the land owners arranged to clear the area of fly tipped rubbish and remove overgrown vegetation that was providing cover for illegal activities. The former garage area has also been cleared of rubbish, including drug paraphernalia, and securely boarded. Two 16 tonne sized skips of rubbish have been removed by the contractors. As a result of this work the visual appearance of the area has improved and hopefully will be less attractive to anti-social behaviour in the future.

Building Control

External Cladding to Buildings

28. My thoughts are with all of those impacted by the Grenfell tragedy. The incident created understandable concern about similar buildings across the country. Nationally the focus has been on buildings 18 metres or more in height. In Darlington we have no high-rise residential accommodation but we do have a very small number of high-rise commercial buildings. Officers have been working with the Fire and Rescue service, building managers, and our in-house designers to identify the type of external cladding to buildings of four storeys or more in Darlington. Whilst some information is still being sought on a few non-residential buildings in the private sector no serious issues have come to light and all of the Council's own buildings (including those leased to third parties), and all schools and colleges in Darlington are believed to be constructed with appropriate materials for the nature of the building.

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Economy and Regeneration Portfolio