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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Economy and Regeneration Portfolio.

**Local Plan**

**Timetable**

2. Work is progressing on the Local Plan, the current expectation is that a copy of the proposed submission copy of the Local Plan will be submitted to Members in January 2018.

**Objective Assessment of Housing Need (OAN)**

3. Members will be aware that the Housing White Paper (February 2017) proposed a standard methodology for objective assessing housing need for Local Plan preparation. The Paper suggested that the Government would consult on the methodology in the Summer. The Government has now informed local authorities that it intends to consult this month. In the absence of the new methodology, and to ensure progress with the Local Plan, Cabinet has decided to update the OAN taking into account the most recent population projections and housing completions.

**Heighington and Middleton St George**

4. It has been recognised that some of the villages in the Borough can contribute to the supply of housing sites and in particular to the five year supply. Work has been progressing with interested parties including Parish Councils on identifying potential sites in Heighington and Middleton St George. It is the intention to carry out a wider consultation exercise with some preferred options for development in the villages before the end of October 2017.

**Land at Whinfield/Skerningham and Greater Faverdale – Masterplan Frameworks**

5. In order to promote new development and economic growth, Cabinet agreed to the inclusion of Council land in the Greater Faverdale and Skerningham Garden Village Masterplan Frameworks which are being undertaken to support the Local Plan process.
6. Cabinet also agreed, in principle, that Equalisation Agreements should be entered into with respective landowners for each Masterplan area so that the land can be brought forward and developed comprehensively. An Equalisation Agreement

ensures all landowners get a fair share of land value as and when land is brought forward for development within the area covered by the Masterplan.

7. The Director of Neighbourhood and Resources and Director of Economic Growth, in consultation with respective portfolio holders, have delegated powers to progress negotiations and agree terms in line with Heads of Terms detailed in the Cabinet report.

### **Investment and Funding Team**

8. The Investment and Funding Team has secured £256,000 grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) towards eight new Affordable Housing units on Jedburgh Drive.
9. A further bid has been submitted to HCA for £256,000 for the former Jack Horner Pub site, located on Whitby Way.
10. Confirmation has been received that the three bids to Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) for contribution towards development and feasibility work have been successful, securing £630,000 of grant to support Feethams Office Development, Bank Top Station and Faverdale.
11. Officers are also working on the Morton Palms, Ingenium Parc, Feetham Offices and Central Park outline business cases with a view to securing funding from TVCA.
12. Work is also progressing on a bid for European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for the Feethams Office Development.
13. The Investment and Funding Team is currently working on an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the HCA's Housing Infrastructure Fund - Forward Funding which comprises land to the north of Darlington, including land at Whinfield/Skerningham and Greater Faverdale, detailed above. The Council cannot bid directly to HCA for this funding therefore the EOI was submitted with the support Cabinet, to TVCA who submitted a bid to HCA by the deadline of 26 September 2017.
14. The Investment and Funding Team is also working on three bids to HCA's Housing Infrastructure Fund – Marginal Viability Fund. The Council can bid directly to HCA for this funding for up to £10m per site. The funding targets sites that either have a planning permission, or are close to securing permission, but have stalled owing to viability issues. The guidance states that if the Council submits multiple bids, then the bids must be prioritised. The sites, in order of priority, that Darlington are proposing are:
  - (a) West Park Garden Village;
  - (b) Great Burdon; and
  - (c) Neasham Road

15. The Council is lead partner, working with Durham County Council, Stockton Borough Council, Tees Valley Combined Authority and other key stakeholders, on a submission to Historic England (HE) to secure Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) status for the length of the Darlington and Stockton (D&S) Railway line. Securing HAZ status will create a relationship with HE that will mean that HE will prioritise its range of expert and financial resources towards D&S initiatives. The HAZ work is being led by the Council's Historic Assets Officer and Economic Projects Team. The bid has successfully passed the first sift and the outcome of the application is anticipated in October.
16. The Council is also lead partner for an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to support the delivery of the Experience Darlington ambition. It is anticipated that the outcome of a Resilience Grant application might be known in November 2017.

### **Development Management**

17. 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.
18. A series of important housing applications from the list below were reported to Planning Committee on 23 August 2017:
  - (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.
19. 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 for end of 2017 and that will realise significant benefits for the public and Members.

20. Further negotiations are ongoing with regard to major housing and commercial projects which are commercially sensitive at this stage to ensure a constant throughput of appropriate sites for both housing and commercial development.

### **Economic Strategy Performance Indicators**

21. Employment rate is 74.9 per cent - above both the North East (70.4 per cent) and national averages (74 per cent).
22. 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.
23. Darlington currently has 3,100 businesses with 52,000 jobs, since 2012 Darlington businesses have created an additional 4,000 jobs.
24. 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.
25. 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 seven per cent.
26. In 2015 Darlington businesses contributed £2.591 billion to national economy, rising from 2014 by £141 million.

### **Economy Team Update**

27. Since the last portfolio report the Team has continued to generate new investment projects as well as working on existing projects. The total value of the projects online could, if secured, create in excess of 2000 jobs.
28. The Team's 'Invest in Darlington' investment and property website has generated 14 external searches of sites and property.
29. The Council's Economy Team co-ordinated a programme of business support activity with a range of partner organisations, taking place at various locations across Darlington under the 'Darlington Business Week' umbrella from 18 to 22 September. Its aims were to:
  - (a) Raise the profile of the 'Ingenious Darlington' brand;

- (b) Generate new investment project leads and business contacts for the Economy Team;
  - (c) Increase awareness of support initiatives available to Darlington businesses that could stimulate growth in their business, leading to economic growth and job creation; and
  - (d) Provide assistance to businesses to overcome barriers to growth and to realise opportunities.
30. The first event featured the 'Darlington Business Summit' at Teesside University's Darlington campus.
31. The Business Week featured 20 events, involving 61 partner organisations with over 1000 delegates taking part. The week culminated in the public celebration of Darlington Business with the Festival of Ingenuity.

### **Superfast Broadband**

32. The TVCA has agreed to use £1.2m of TVCA Mayoral Devolution monies to upgrade the TV area to 98.1 percent reflectively matching Broadband Delivery UK contribution.
33. TVCA are expecting a detailed costed map from Digital Durham (the programme lead) by end of September 2017 outlining the target priority, with an estimated delivery date of 2018.

### **Regulatory Services**

34. Officers from the Trading Standards Team, accompanied by Durham Police, uncovered thousands of illegal cigarettes hidden behind a false wall and a large quantity of cash in a vehicle when they investigated a retail premises as part of Operation Henry 2, a national illegal tobacco operation. The outcome of a lengthy investigation was that the case was heard against the defendant at Teesside Crown Court on 18 July 2017. The defendant eventually pleaded guilty in relation to five offences under the Trade Marks Act 1994 and was sentenced to twelve months custody suspended for two years. A forfeiture application is on-going in relation to the cash.
35. On 26 July 2017, Officers from the Trading Standards team participated in Operation Mermaid, a Durham Police-led multi-agency operation with an overall theme of disrupting, deterring and detecting offences relating to all forms of vehicle-enabled criminality, improving compliance with the law, gathering intelligence and providing public reassurance through enhanced visibility. Officers provided on-the-spot advice to traders on compliance with trading standards legislation and follow-up written advice and guidance was given.

## **Darlington Cares**

36. I am a Board member of Darlington Cares, an organisation which was established in October 2012 to maximise the impact of local employers' corporate social responsibility (CSR). It is funded by contributions from its members. Since then its membership has grown dramatically and the combined benefit to the Town of its members' CSR has been hugely increased.
37. Darlington Cares offers a coordinated approach to corporate social responsibility by utilising the skills, expertise, knowledge and volunteering resources of local businesses and their employees. These are matched to bespoke volunteering projects or existing community groups and charities. Volunteering projects are delivered across three key areas:
- (a) Environment;
  - (b) Education; and
  - (c) Social Justice.
38. Darlington Cares works closely with the local authority, Darlington Partnership, public services and the third sector, to identify and understand the key areas of need within the Borough. Their projects work to support a wide range of needs including; children's reading skills, youth employability, the impact of poverty, and environmental improvement.
39. To date Darlington Cares achievements include:
- (a) 22 members;
  - (b) 11,000 hours of employee supported volunteering;
  - (c) 75 successful projects;
  - (d) Over 120 Busy Reader volunteers trained;
  - (e) Over 3,000 children benefited from the Busy Readers scheme; and
  - (f) Over 850 young people have benefited from an employability skills program.
40. Darlington Cares plans to continue to grow and to this end has just been successful in securing a grant from County Durham Community Foundation which has allowed it to engage the support of a PR consultant to raise its profile and attract more members.

**Councillor Chris McEwan**  
**Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**