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**OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio.

**Schemes of Work**

2. Highway maintenance schemes due to start:  
Hurworth, Church Row – Carriageway resurfacing.
3. Highway maintenance schemes currently ongoing:
  - (a) Carriageway Micro Asphalt Programme – numerous throughout Borough
  - (b) Snackgate Lane Heighington – Carriageway refurbishment; and
  - (c) B6279 Staindrop Rd, approach to B6280 Carmel Road – Carriageway resurfacing
4. Highway maintenance schemes recently completed:
  - (a) Hollyhurst Road – Woodland Road to Orchard Road – carriageway refurbishment
  - (b) C39 Walworth Road – Walworth Gate to B6279 Staindrop Road: Carriageway hunching and part resurfacing; and
  - (c) Tubwell Row/Crown Street Roundabout – carriageway refurbishment

**Town Centre Parking**

5. New parking meters have been installed in most off street car parks within the town centre. We are proposing to refurbish Hird Street car park and provide hard paved blockway boundaries to Park Place East car park. It is also proposed to resurface Abbots Yard car park in 2018. This will also involve a re-lining scheme.

**A68 Rotary Way Improvement Scheme**

6. This scheme was completed in October 2017. The scheme was funded by Highways England from their Housing and Growth Fund. This forms part of a package of works to increase capacity on the A68 in order to facilitate development on West Park Garden Village and Faverdale.
7. The next phase is to carry out some roundabout improvements in Cockerton to increase capacity. These works will be done in 2018/19 financial year. A third phase involves the construction of a new link road from the end of Edward Pease Way to Newton Lane.

8. The whole programme of works are likely to be completed within the three years.

### **Successful Funding Bid – National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF)**

9. The Council has been successful in a £3.3m bid to the Department for Transport NPIF. The money will be spent on highway and transport improvements to alleviate congestion and unlock development sites around Central Park, Morton Palms and the Eastern Transport corridor.
10. The project will link to other planned investment to reduce congestion at the A66 Morton Palms roundabout, provide capacity improvements at the McMullen Road/Yarm Road roundabout and Haughton Road throughabout and help develop the road links between Yarm Road and the Eastern Transport Corridor.
11. Works will commence on McMullen Road/Yarm Road roundabout in 2018.

### **Experience Darlington – A Visitor Economy Strategy**

12. Cabinet received an update on the feedback following the Experience Darlington consultation and agreed to adopt the amended Experience Darlington Strategy 2016/26.
13. The current position in respect of the indoor market was outlined, the operation of which had recently transferred to Market Asset Management (MAM) and we received background information to the strategy; the full public consultation exercise that had been undertaken between January and April 2017; the revisions made to the strategy and the Experience Darlington Action Plan following that consultation; and the financial implications.
14. The three main priorities for action which were a Railway Town, a Theatre Town and a Town to Visit and to the key milestones in achieving those priorities.
15. The support of the Tees Valley Combined Authority was also noted, in providing resource to lead the Railway Heritage project forward as part of the Tees Valley economic development, and funding the Project Director for the 2025 200th Railway Anniversary, as part of the Culture Development programme, to mark the first public passenger railway.
16. The Strategy will maximise the opportunities tourism presents to the Borough for the benefit of existing businesses and residents by presenting a cohesive strategic plan and ambition, partner organisations can support.
17. It will also maximise the potential for investment in Darlington, increasing the Council's opportunity to bid for and deliver externally funded regeneration of key cultural and historic assets; and underpin our strategies for economic growth by encouraging more people (footfall) into the town, spending money and supporting local businesses in the process.

## **Christmas Parking and Bus Travel Offers**

18. Cabinet has approved the seasonal Christmas parking and bus travel offers in the town centre to support local retail trade and encourage both existing and new customers to come and shop in Darlington.
19. It has been agreed that the third hour be free in Council short stay off-street car parks from 23 November 2017 until 2 January 2018; and East Street car park will operate a £2 offer for all day parking from 23 November 2017 until 2 January 2018.
20. Arriva has also proposed two bus travel offers to support retail trade during the Christmas shopping period and will include reference to these offers will be advertising and promoting the parking offer.

## **Move More Activities**

### **Sheltered Housing Update**

21. The programme has brought new activities such as Tai Chi and Archery to the residents. There are 12 weekly sessions, as well as events; such as museum visits, techy coffee mornings, dance performances, choirs and police dog visits. There have been 2052 attendances during the period spanning January 2017 to September 2017.

### **Red Hall Healthy New Towns Project**

22. A new project has started to try and encourage Red Hall residents and people from the surrounding area to engage in physical activity. There are four sessions being delivered free of charge to the participants, each week. The activities include Walking Football, Nordic Walking, Couch 2 5k and an Outdoor Boot Camp. The sessions are held in community spaces to remove any barriers when it comes to travel and held during school time to alleviate any childcare issues.

### **Disability Project**

23. The Disability Project delivers five weekly sessions out in the community at different adult day service settings to encourage those with a disability to keep healthy and exercise. Participants pay £1 per session from their personal budgets to take part in the numerous different activities delivered on a weekly basis from dance to Boccia and even golf. On average we have around 40 participants per week who access these sessions.

### **Active Darlington Project**

24. This project has engaged 2456 participants over the last three years in a variety of informal sporting activities; especially the inactive participants and over 14 year olds. Following a successful application for another year of funding, the scheme has engaged a further 570 participants; 412 being over 14 years old, 55 per cent female, 45 per cent male and ten per cent having a disability or from a Black and

Minority Ethnic (BME) background. New projects have included Battle Archery, Girls Football, Walking Football and Women and Girls Table Tennis sessions.

### **Hell of the North Cycle Ride**

25. 196 people registered for the 100 mile Hell of the North Cycle Ride provided by the Darlington Events Team. Conditions were near perfect for participants who came from all over the Country. The experience was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

### **Market Square Events**

26. It was another successful RnB festival this year, which took place on 10 September in the Market Square and surrounding public houses. There were two additional businesses (public houses) added to the already extensive list of venues participating during the day.
27. The Market Square also hosted the Oktoberfest on 13 and 14 October in partnership with a major events company that attracted 2200 visitors over the course of the weekend.
28. Highlights for November include the Darlington Christmas Lights Switch-On on tonight supported by Feethams Leisure and in partnership with TFM Radio.

### **Festival of Ingenuity**

29. The event took place on 22 and 23 September celebrating the many achievements of the town's business and inspiring young children. The event was a huge success.
30. Now in its second year, footfall doubled along with exhibits and activities for the public to participate in and enjoy, spanning three sites around the town, linked via a mini train. Also, a vintage bus trip to the Head of Steam Museum and Tees Pumping Station went down a treat with those who attended.

### **Darlington Hippodrome**

31. Darlington Hippodrome and The Hullabaloo were handed back to the Council on 6 November. A Members tour was organised for 16 November prior to the official opening which took place on 17 November. The focus of this event was for the main funders, with the ribbon being cut by the National Heritage Lottery Chair, Sir Peter Luff and myself. The opening event was then followed by the first show 'Strictly Musical 2' by the Darlington Operatic Society which will run until 25 November. This was a homecoming for the theatre and the society who have been associated with the theatre since 1921.
32. This will then be followed by a one off performance on 27 November, 'Encountering the Other' by Darlington based theatre company Odd Man Out, in collaboration with the Market Theatre Laboratory (Johannesburg), who are presenting at The Hippodrome, a new production, 'Encountering the Other', which examines what it is

to be a woman in 2017 on both sides of the World. Young people have auditioned in both Darlington and Johannesburg and will be performing firstly at the Ramolao Makhene Theatre, South Africa and then at The Hippodrome.

33. This year's pantomime, Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs, will run from 9 December 2017 to 14 January 2018.

### **Visual Arts**

34. Three exhibitions have opened at the gallery in Crown Street Library since July 2017: 'Moving Forward, Looking Back, A History of Darlington Hippodrome', 27 July to 7 September 2017; 'The Splendour of Steam', by railway and landscape artist Stephen Bainbridge, 14 October to 9 November 2017; and 'Conversations in Painting - if it fits in the Fiesta you're in', an artist led exhibition of new and recent paintings, which secured a Grants for the Arts Award from Arts Council England. Three exhibitions have opened in the exhibition space at Darlington Town Hall.
35. The Council loaned a work from the Borough Art Collection, 'The Entombment' by John Minton, for a major retrospective; 'John Minton: A Centenary Exhibition at the Pallant House Gallery, which ran from 1 July 2017 to 1 October 2017 and secured national coverage. The exhibition marked a centenary since the artist's birth and 60 years since his early death, at just 39 years old

### **Accessible, Distinctive and Excellent Cultural Activity**

36. Arts Council England, County Durham Community Foundation, the Council, Darlington for Culture, Durham County Council and local businesses supported a programme of inclusive cultural activity including IncludFEST Tees Valley (held in South Park, Darlington, 15 July 2017), IncludFEST Durham (held in Wharton Park, September 2017) and within the Festival of Ingenuity (Darlington town centre, September 2017). The Council secured a Grants for the Arts offer from Arts Council England to support this work, which was led by Tin Arts.

### **Darlington Theatre Town**

37. The Council secured a significant Grants for the Arts offer from Arts Council England to support a programme of theatre activity, including events, training and research, working with Creative Darlington, Darlington Hippodrome, Luxi/Jabberwocky Market, ODDMANOUT and Theatre Hullabaloo. Various events have been held, with support from Darlington Borough Council Events Team, including Wet Picnics presentation of 'The Ball and After-Party' in Darlington Market Place on the evening of 26 August 2017 and a four day Pop-Up Theatre Town programme featuring Jabberwocky Market and Paines Plough Roundabout, from 5 to 8 October 2017.

### **Head of Steam Families and Events**

38. The new 'Station Scamps' activities on Fridays have been launched for annual pass holders with children under 5. A grant from the Regional Museums

Development Programme was received, which is allowing us to pilot a range of activities and to work with a specialist practitioner.

### **Volunteers**

39. Volunteers worked for 136.5 hours in August and 208 hours in September; supporting collections and events. Potential new volunteers are also being interviewed.

### **Collections**

40. Work has started on the poster project, funded by Museum Development North East. Volunteers are cataloguing the poster collection in order to improve access and create an exhibition for 2017.

### **Events**

41. The museum hosted a number of events during September, including the annual Darlington Model Railway Club Exhibition, Heritage Open Days, Festival of Ingenuity and the annual Family Fun Day.

### **Self-Service in the Library**

42. Three self-service machines have arrived at Crown Street Library. Following the installation of two kiosks initially, all three kiosks became fully configured in November for the loan and return of books and the ability to take payment for transactions.

### **National Libraries Week – Local Studies Open Day**

43. Local Studies held an Open Day to encourage visitors to research their local and family history. Items from the collection not usually on display were shown to over 100 visitors. Aerial photographs, historic postcard collections and paintings were some of the recent donations on display.

### **Durham Wildlife Trust**

44. Durham Wildlife Trust has entered into a lease with the Council to manage and maintain a number of sites across the Borough at The Whinnies, Middleton St George, Geneva Wood, Brankin Moor, Brinkburn and Snipe Pond. Durham Wildlife Trust will be working in partnership with the Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company to maintain a number of these sites.

## **Environmental Volunteering Celebration Event**

45. Volunteers from a range of backgrounds, including Street Champions, Countryside Volunteers, Friends Groups, organisations working with Darlington Cares, and also representatives from other environmental volunteering organisations who work in partnership with the Council, were invited to a celebration event at the Dolphin Centre on 25 September. Over 50 people attended this event, which was extremely successful. I personally found it informative and met numerous residents who are volunteering for various activities whether litter picking, maintaining areas in parks and other open spaces. This event will be held annually as a way of celebrating the valuable work volunteers carry out to improve the local environment throughout the Borough.

**Councillor Nick Wallis**  
**Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**