

LEADER'S OVERVIEW

Combined Authority Updates

1. The principle areas of activity at the Combined Authority include releasing funds for investment propositions and the Council is working on a number of Darlington priority projects. In addition work continues on an Education and Skills Strategy that will underpin efforts and resourcing to support educational attainment and initiatives to tackle unemployment and improving skills for adults. The Combined Authority is continuing to support the Council in its work to plan for 2025, rail heritage.

Transport/Rail Updates

2. Work is progressing well on the Tees Valley Strategic Plan. I chaired a workshop bringing together Leaders, Portfolio Holders, and officers to help with the development of the plan to ensure key partners from across the Tees Valley have their input to influence further development of the plan. This will feed into the development of the plan and daughter documents which will be consulted upon in the New Year.
3. Work continues to be developed on the business cases for the two Strategic Road Priorities; a new Tees Crossing and the A66 East West: Northern Relief Road. The work on the A66 East West: Northern Relief Road will feed into two national pieces of work that have commenced:-
 - (a) Highways England A66 Northern TransPennine scheme: This project is looking to develop improvements across the 80 km corridor between the M6 and A1(M) motorways. The TransPennine scheme is part of Highways England's Road Investment Strategy. It links the east of England to central Scotland (including Glasgow) and will be improved to provide better connectivity in the North. The TransPennine Scheme will alleviate pressure on the M62, which links the North-east to the North-west of England.
 - (b) Transport for the North's: Connecting the Energy Coasts Strategic Development Corridor. TFN have commissioned work on this corridor looking at the case for improving connections for people and businesses and exploring options for improving road, rail and waterborne capacity. The corridor links advanced manufacturing businesses and energy generation facilities located in the North East, Tees Valley, Lancashire and Cumbria. Transport investment within this corridor could also unlock employment, supply chain and housing opportunities as part of the Government's Industrial Strategy. Advanced manufacturing and energy industries in the corridor have attracted a significant

amount of prospective investment.

- (c) Working with Ben Houchen, Mayor of the Tees Valley Combined Authority, the next stages of development have commenced on Darlington 2025 – A Modern Rail Hub for a Modern Economy Project. This work will see further strength added to the business case for investment and a proposition being developed to Government.
- 4. As Chair of the Tees Valley Transport Committee I attended a joint, rail focussed stakeholder event organised by Northern Rail and the North East Chamber of Commerce. The event provided the opportunity for Mark Wilson, Head of Transport at the Tees Valley Combined Authority to present the Tees Valley priorities for rail.

Cabinet

- 5. At the Cabinet meeting held on 7 November 2017 we considered and gave our approval to the draft Corporate Plan 2017-21 and supporting framework for performance management prior to its submission to Council for final approval.
- 6. The new Corporate Plan is an overarching high level strategy detailing how the Council contributes to the outcomes set out in the wider Sustainable Community Strategy; and aims to provide a clear and accessible summary for Members, partners and residents of the priorities for Darlington over the coming 4 years.
- 7. The Corporate Plan has been developed in alignment with the four year Medium Term Finance Plan agreed in June 2016 which sets out the strategic service priorities to 2021.
- 8. Cabinet has also given its approval to the commencement of consultation on the draft equality policy and objective.
- 9. During a pre-consultation engagement period with relevant local stakeholders a broad agreement was reached for a new draft equality policy and objectives have been developed incorporating the feedback and recommendations collected during this time.
- 10. Publishing an equality policy containing the Council's equality objectives is the most efficient and effective way of complying with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out within the Equality Act 2010.

Darlington Partnership

- 11. There have been two Darlington Partnership Board meeting in September and most recently on 8 November. The Board has considered progress towards the ambitions laid out in One Darlington Perfectly Placed of more businesses and more jobs and a place designed to thrive. The presentation given by Ian Williams was well received and the good progress commended.

12. The Board also received the material prepared to raise awareness of employers to the issue of domestic violence. A campaign to promote the material is being planned in collaboration with the office of the Police Crime and Victim's Commissioner. This is another great example of the Partnership being action focused and demonstrating drive and a willingness from partners to make a difference.
13. The board also heard about the progress of Darlington Cares, an initiative which aligns the corporate social responsibility activity of local employers. The scheme has delivered 3,700 hours of volunteering this year to date addressing issues to do with the environment, education and social justice. It is making plans for significant growth and has appointed a new Programme Officer, Chelsea Johnson and taken on a company called Harvey and Hugo to provide PR support.

Community Safety

14. The Community Safety Partnership Board met on 26 September and considered key aspects of the "One Darlington: Perfectly Safe" Plan, including domestic abuse, hate crime, vulnerable people and places.
15. Following repeated complaints of nuisance, disorder and disruption to community life, the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team, supported by Durham Constabulary, obtained a Property Closure Order in respect of a property in Darlington.
16. The property was littered with drug paraphernalia and used syringes which provided an insight into the use of the property and the contributing factors which may have led to the nuisance behaviour and lack of control of the property by the tenant.
17. Members of the community have expressed their gratitude for the actions of DBC and the Police commenting "We are extremely grateful to you and all colleagues for this superb response to the problem of anti-social behaviour in the area".
18. The Darlington Youth Justice Plan for the period 2017/18 has been published and is available on the Council's Website. Priorities include reducing offending and reoffending, supporting victims and protecting the public and providing safe and secure futures for young people.

Remembrance Day

19. On 10 November I was pleased to attend the Remembrance Day Assembly held at Wyvern Academy.
20. On 9 November I was delighted to attend the unveiling of a plaque at Cleveland Bridge to commemorate the sacrifice of employees who lost their lives in WW2. The company recently uncovered archive material on this sacrifice and realising that there was a plaque to mark WW1 decided to rectify and commission a new Plaque. The Lord Lieutenant unveiled the Plaque and a number of company pensioners and long service employers joined the ceremony. This is further

evidence of a great Darlington company with an ongoing commitment to the community it serves.

21. Finally I am sure that the Council will share with me sadness at the death of Cllr Paul Watson, Leader of Sunderland City Council. A friend to Darlington and a great hard working advocate for his city and for the local government community he will be missed.

Bill Dixon
Leader