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**LEADER'S OVERVIEW**

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**General**

1. Following Council approval to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) I note and welcome the profile nationally that is being given to the challenges local authorities are facing financially. While the Council has balanced its books and is able to make some modest re-investments, the outlook remains extremely challenging and services to the most vulnerable continue to take a growing share of a decreasing budget. Along with colleagues in the region and the Local Government Association I am pressing the Government to support a funding allocation that properly reflects need.

**Tees Valley Combined Authority**

2. Since the last Council the Combined Authority has signed off its annual revenue budget, a new Education, Employment and Skills Strategy, funding to support the office development at Feethams, and launched its tourism website, amongst other things. I encourage all Members to review developments on the website [www.teesvalley-ca.gov.uk](http://www.teesvalley-ca.gov.uk) and I am pleased to note the positive contribution that our Scrutiny and Audit Committee members are making.
3. I can advise Council that there have been some constructive discussions with the Mayor on the future of the Durham Tees Valley Airport, discussions that are helping to ensure that while the Mayor explores an alternative ownership model, every effort is being made to hold the current operators to account and to boost passenger numbers. This is the goal that I and the other Leaders have been most concerned with.
4. I was delighted to attend the sod-cutting event for the Horizons Centre at Central Park. This £22.3m research, teaching and training facility is further evidence of the growing bio-tech cluster and the commitment of Teesside University.

**Transport**

5. At National level the Department for Transport, Highways England and Network Rail are forming their long term investment plans. TVCA and the five local authorities have an agreed clear set of strategic transport priorities that formed part of the Devolution deal. I continue to ensure these are well articulated and promoted to the National Transport Bodies through work on TFN and Rail North.

6. There have been a number of other meetings concerning my role in the Combined Authority, as well as my weekly transport briefing meetings with Officers. I attended the Transport for the North Shadow Board Meeting on 8 February 2018 at the Crowne Plaza, Newcastle to discuss the Transport for the North Business Plan for 2018/19 and the Budget and Reserve Strategy 2018/19; followed by the Rail North Limited Annual General Meeting; and the NECA Transport Meeting.
7. Development work is underway on all of the Tees Valley priorities to position them into the long term National Investment programmes from 2019/20 onwards. These include:
  - (a) Enhancements to the A19 corridor and the requirement for an additional Tees river crossing.
  - (b) Darlington station to be HS2 ready and improve the rail gateway into and across the Tees Valley.
  - (c) Development of the Darlington Northern Link Road.
  - (d) Enhancement of the Northallerton to Teesport rail line to improve connectivity for business, freight and passengers.
  - (e) Improvements to public transport and the bus network and services.
8. At a regional level Transport for the North (TfN) are set to become the first statutory sub-national transport body with statutory powers and duties that will inform national spending programmes. TfN is presently consulting on a Strategic Transport Plan for the North, which has been informed by the Tees Valley priorities. TfN launched its strategy from Darlington in January 2018.
9. In the draft plan TfN has identified seven strategic development corridors across the North where it will focus on improving transport infrastructure. These corridors link important 'prime capability' assets and important economic centres that are currently in need of improved connectivity. Darlington and the Tees Valley are within three of the seven corridors across the North:
  - (a) 'Connecting the Energy Coasts': This corridor looks at improving connectivity between some of the UK's important non-carbon energy advanced manufacturing, research assets and economic centres in Cumbria, Lancashire, North Yorkshire, the North East and Tees Valley. This corridor specifically aligns to and refers to the Tees Valley Strategic priority of improvements on the A66 corridor to Teesport, including Darlington Northern Link Road.

TfN's Energy Coast corridor fits with national priority and direction of travel from the Department for Transport and Highways England who has commenced studies to focus improvements on the A66 between the M6 and the A1(M) and for this route across the Pennines to be the strategic northern trans-Pennine route to relieve pressure on other east-west connections and improve resilience and connectivity.
  - (b) 'East Coast to Scotland': Improving rail reliability, speed and reach along the east coast mainline and other key lines to provide enhanced strategic and local connectivity in the North East, Tees Valley and North Yorkshire as well as onward connections to Scotland. This corridor references 'East Coast Mainline

stations HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail ready including Darlington 2025 vision’.

- (c) ‘Yorkshire to Scotland’: Building on existing road investment commitments to further strengthen road connectivity between the Midlands, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Tees Valley, the North East and Scotland. This is predominantly North South connectivity improvements and relies on the A1(M) and A19 to connect regions. Both of these roads run through or parallel to the Tees Valley. This corridor reflects the Tees Valley Strategic priority of improvements on the A19 and a New Tees Crossing. Importantly, the intersection of this corridor and the Energy Coasts/A66 Trans-Pennine improvements provides an important series of improvements for the Tees Valley which will improve both east-west and north-south connectivity and resilience.

- 10. Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) is TfN’s vision for transforming rail travel across the north, offering much faster, more frequent and reliable rail links opening up opportunities for northern citizens and business. NPR would link the North’s Cities and Significant Economic Centres with Darlington Station and the vision for 2025 as the Tees Valley, South Durham and North Yorkshire gateway station.

### **Darlington Partnership**

- 11. I was pleased to see a second Darlington Volunteering Fair take place on 1 February 2018 organised by Darlington Partnership in collaboration with Darlington Cares. The event provided an opportunity for local voluntary and community groups to meet with people who are considering becoming volunteers. Groups were offered the opportunity to display what they do. Sixty six voluntary organisations attended who reported anecdotally that the event was a success both in terms of interest from the public but just as importantly because of the opportunity to network.
- 12. The highlight of the year is fast approaching and nominations are still being invited for the Best of Darlington Awards which celebrate outstanding efforts and achievements across a wide sphere of activity. Nominations can be made through the following link <http://www.onedarlington.org.uk/best-of-darlington-2018/> I would strongly encourage all of us to nominate those people and business that make a difference in our communities.

### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

- 13. I attended the Holocaust Memorial Day Ceremony on 29 January 2018 when a number of events and activities took place to mark Holocaust Memorial Day in Darlington with the aim of spreading the message to as many people as possible.
- 14. The theme of this year’s Memorial Day was ‘The power of words’ and Memorial Events were held in the Upper Mall Main Atrium in the Cornmill Centre during the day and an evening event at the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College; other events included an exhibition in Crown Street Library with a Book of Reflection for people to sign; a Poetry Event in the Library hosted by Vane Women; and a screening of

'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' took place at The Forum, hosted by Darlington Film Club.

## **Overview of Crime and Disorder**

15. In line with national and local trends, recorded crime in Darlington has increased 30 per cent year to date (1 April 2017 – 31 January 2018) when compared with a similar period 2016/17 Other increases in the Durham Constabulary area include South Durham (32 per cent increase), East Durham (50 per cent increase) and West Durham (43 per cent increase).
16. Crimes showing an increase include violence against the person, sexual offences, public disorder and racially aggravated crimes. Again, this is reflective of national and local trends.
17. It is worth noting that some of the increases are due to improved reporting and changes in recording methodology around ASB.
18. Darlington has also experienced a six per cent increase in all reported incidents during the same period although anti-social behaviour across Darlington is down eight per cent.
19. An area of concern is Darlington Town Centre where crime and anti-social behaviour is up 22 per cent and nine per cent respectively. Of particular concern is youth related ASB and begging. Darlington Community Safety Partnership and the Multi-Agency Problem Solving Group are currently working together to tackle these issues and have developed and completed a number of operations, initiatives and time limited work to reduce crime and disorder in the area.
20. The Council is currently working on a proposal that will enhance capacity to work with the Police and other agencies on improving community safety. This will be greatly assisted with the additional resources allocated within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

## **Anti-Social Behaviour**

21. Since 1 January, 2017, 360 people (264 young people and 96 adults) have been referred to the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit for intervention and diversionary activities. Of the total number, 352 have received official warnings (248 young people and 86 adults), 43 have been issued with Acceptable Behaviour Agreements and three Criminal Behaviour Orders have been granted by the Youth Court. The rate of recidivism is eight per cent.

## **Motorcycles**

22. Following increased levels of complaints concerning off-road motor cycles in Darlington the YMCA supported by members of the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Durham Constabulary and Longfield School have introduced a

seven-week themed educational programme to promote safe and responsible motor-cycling in Darlington.

23. The course will deliver a series of core modules around first aid, bike maintenance, health and safety, anti-social behaviour and the role of the Police and will involve six to eight young people between the ages of 14-16 years.
24. The scheme is proving extremely popular with young people and a number of requests have been made to extend the programme to other schools in Darlington.

### **Orcuma (First) Mapping Package**

25. The Council is currently working with Durham County Council, Durham Constabulary, Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue and Orcuma to introduce a mapping package which will display 'live' crime and ASB data in Darlington. The package will support the effective deployment of multi-agency resources to tackle areas of priority in the Borough.

### **Town Centre Night-Time Economy**

26. We are currently working closely with Durham Constabulary to review the night-time economy and secure a safe, secure and vibrant environment in Darlington. The review is focused on securing an understanding of the night-time economy, regulation of premises, supporting Pubwatch, introducing 'Street Angels', promoting Darlington as a safe, secure and attractive venue and researching the 'Purple Flag' initiative which is an accreditation scheme for the night-time economy.

**Bill Dixon**  
**Leader**