
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.

Conservation Area Character Appraisals

2. A public consultation event is planned for 18 May 2018 at Heighington Village Hall regarding the Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal that is being developed by the North East of England Civic Trust on behalf of the Council. The consultation on this document will take place throughout May, with a copy of the document available online and from the Town Hall. This is a part of the wider programme of Conservation Area Character Appraisals being undertaken to inform planning decisions and manage change in these important historic areas.

Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone

3. The official launch of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) is planned for May. This important initiative for Darlington, supported by Historic England, recognises the local and global significance of these historic assets. The HAZ is a partnership between Darlington Borough Council, Durham County Council, Stockton Borough Council, the Friends of the S&DR Historic England and other stakeholders. The HAZ will be focussed on the technical work required to record, conserve, restore and promote these assets to stimulate economic growth. This exciting launch builds on the community led development of a wider initiative in the area and as such demonstrates the commitment of a wide range of stakeholders to deliver a world class visitor experience in the future.

Business Investment Team (Economy)

4. The Team is currently handling 41 live business investment enquiries, assisting companies and intermediaries with a range of information to aid business proposition development, including:-
- (a) Land and property searches;
 - (b) Employment and apprenticeship advice and guidance;
 - (c) Assistance to access funding and collaborative working with other business support partners including the Tees Valley Combined Authority (via Tees Valley Business Compass);

- (d) Teesside University; and
 - (e) The Department for International Trade (DIT).
5. Business Central is now 92 per cent occupied, with the Team working closely to respond to new enquiries and offer support to new businesses moving in. In addition, the Team now offer a fortnightly 'drop in' session for businesses to meet with a Business Growth and Investment Officer for any relevant business support assistance.
 6. Year to date, there has been a total of 65 new property and land search enquiries from businesses via the Council's 'Invest in Darlington' website which continues to attract a range of new leads each month.
 7. Direct business engagement activity continues with key businesses to both help source new business investment opportunities and to generate business success stories to raise the profile of the Darlington business community via the monthly 'Business in Darlington' e-newsletter.
 8. Notable business stories this month include Cummins, who have taken on an additional 120 production operatives to meet growing demand for its products. The Darlington site is now producing around 300 engines per day. Two Darlington businesses won awards at the North East Business Awards; Cleveland Bridge UK Limited picked up Manufacturer of the Year, whilst Total Recycling won Best Services Provider.
 9. There are currently 3,200 unemployed residents, equating to 6.3 per cent of the Darlington population. The North East as a whole has 6.5 per cent registered unemployed residents.

Local Plan Update

10. The Draft Local Plan will be presented to a Special Cabinet Meeting on 29 May 2018 with a recommendation that the Council carry out a six week consultation as soon after the meeting as possible.

Investment and Funding

11. The Council's bid for £2.78m Housing Infrastructure Fund for West Park Garden Village is currently going through Homes England's due diligence process.
12. Funding contracts for Ingenium Park (£3.9m) and Faverdale development funding (£220k) are now in place with Tees Valley Combined Authority.
13. A bid has been submitted to Homes England for £1.08m Affordable Homes Programme grant to support the delivery of 30 housing units on Allington Way North.

Development Management

14. The Planning Applications Committee has recently granted the following applications which are all subject to a Section 106 Agreement:-
 - (a) Outline planning permission for 370 houses at Berrymead Farm;
 - (b) Outline planning permission for 380 dwellings at Burtree Lane;
 - (c) Outline application for 100 dwellings at Roundhill Road, Hurworth; and
 - (d) Planning permission for an A1 store and 10 dwellings at Acorn Close, Middleton St George.

15. Key applications currently being considered include:-
 - (a) Outline planning permission for up to 226 houses Station Road, Middleton St George (16/00976/OUT);
 - (b) Outline planning permission for 280 houses at Lingfield Point (16/00985/OUT);
 - (c) Full planning permission for 20 houses at Woodland Road, Cockerton (17/00237/FUL);
 - (d) Outline application for housing at Coniscliffe Park (17/00632/OUT and 17/00636/OUT);
 - (e) Full planning permission for 75 dwellings at Walworth Road, Heighington (18/00035/FUL); and
 - (f) Outline application for 15 dwellings at Low Coniscliffe (18/00023/OUT).

16. A reserved matters planning application has been submitted for land east of Lingfield Point to accommodate a logistics and distribution facility with accompanying office space. The Business Park which in total extends to over 96 acres has the potential to create over 3000 jobs and the developers believe that the proposal will result in significant private sector investment and growth.

17. There has been some progress made in upgrading the ICT systems that support the planning service. We have enabled the Planning Portal payments service to allow people to pay for planning applications directly, and receipts from planning applications continue to be healthy. Unfortunately, due to problems with a data extract, both the new Document Management and Public Access projects have been delayed. We hope to have these live within the next quarter to improve the efficiency of the service for both Members and the general public.

Trading Standards

18. Trading Standards worked with Durham Police to investigate the activities of a store, which opened in Darlington during January 2018, following complaints about

sales of cigarettes to under-age people and sales of counterfeit cigarettes. On a recent visit to the store to investigate the allegations, a quantity of suspected illegal tobacco products, 5,710 cigarettes and 1.05kg hand-rolling tobacco, were seized.

19. Durham Police, in response to further complaints, made another visit to the premises shortly afterwards and a further 2,160 cigarettes and 5.55kg hand-rolling tobacco were seized. Trading Standards will take the investigation forward. Illegal tobacco enforcement remains a key priority for Trading Standards.
20. Trading Standards, as part of the North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA), participated in a national project, supported by the Department of Health and delivered by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, to review compliance with the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 and the Standardised Packaging of Tobacco Products Regulations 2015.
21. Compliance visits, which focussed on packaged shisha tobacco, tobacco blunts and smokeless tobacco, were undertaken by Officers from Trading Standards to selected Darlington traders. Officers looked at how tobacco products were displayed within the traders' premises (Tobacco Advertising and Promotion (Display) Regulations 2010) and checked that the statutory minimum age of sale notices were on display (Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991).
22. Traders were offered advice on compliance with the law and a report was passed to NETSA.

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Economy and Regeneration Portfolio