
OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

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:-
- (a) A6072 Redworth Phase 2: Carriageway Reconstruction and Resurfacing;
 - (b) A167 Croft Road Phase 7: Carriageway Resurfacing;
 - (c) Unclassified Denmark Street/Wales Street: Back Lane Reconstruction; and
 - (d) A167 Durham Road, Foresters Arms Junction and Inbound Duals: Carriageway Resurfacing.

National Productivity Investment Fund

3. Works have commenced to improve Yarm Road/McMullen Road roundabout. The first phase of work involves the diversion of statutory undertakers equipment (gas, electrics, water, etc.) to enable the carriageway to be widened. The main phase of the work is programmed to commence in July 2018 and be complete by March 2019.

Local Transport Plan Capital Spend and Local Improvement Plan Progress

4. Cabinet received an annual update on highways and transport from a national, regional and local perspective. It included performance, public satisfaction and reports on delivery in 2017/18; information on the proposed update of Darlington's Local Transport Plan (LTP). Cabinet agreed to consult on the Plan and also gave consideration to the 2018/19 programme of projects and agreed to the release £0.866m Integrated Transport Block and £1.689m Highway Maintenance Funding (£1.398m plus £0.291m incentive funding) to deliver the 2018/19 LTP programme.
5. The Tees Valley and Darlington have agreed a clear set of strategic transport priorities that form part of the Tees Valley Devolution deal. The first Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan is being developed, which will link into national and sub-national strategy but will also mean that Darlington has to update its LTP to reflect changes in functions and roles. Darlington will produce a Local Implementation Plan to reflect local priorities and policy with the TVCA focussing on Strategic Transport. Darlington has secured circa £5.5m above LTP allocations which will facilitate growth and improved transport.

6. Particular references were made to the issue of potholes in the Borough and to the pothole policy; the delivery of the Bikeability Plus Scheme in 2017/18; and to the proposal to improve the toucan crossing on Victoria Road. Cabinet agreed that the Pothole Fund monies (amount to be announced) awarded by the Department for Transport (DfT) be released.
7. Cabinet also agreed the release of £1.519m in 2018/19 and £1.855m in 2019/20 from the successful bid to the National Productivity Investment Fund.
8. We also agreed to the submission of due diligence forms for the next tranche of Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Single Pot Sustainable Access to Employment programme funding for schemes on Rotary Way and Woodland Road, and, if successful, £550k of funding and £50k of TVCA development fund monies for feasibility work on Victoria Road, be released.
9. I have delegated authority, along with the Director of Economic Growth, to agree bidding on external funding available through the following funds and, if successful, to release the funding secured for Challenge Fund Tranche 2; Electric Vehicle Charging Points; and Transforming Cities.
10. Cabinet also noted the timetable for consultation on the TVCA Strategic Transport Plan and the proposed framework for consultation on the Darlington Transport Plan; the delivery of transport schemes in 2017/18; current performance in relation to road safety, highway maintenance, network management and public satisfaction; and the delegation of authority to the Director of Economic Growth, in consultation with the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources, to enter into a funding agreement with Highways England should the transport assessment show there is an impact on the strategic road network.
11. These decisions will continue to assist the delivery of the Darlington's Transport Strategy and delivery against the objectives set out in the Local Transport Plan to maximise the opportunities to maintain the highway asset for the benefit of all road users; deliver three major junction improvements to support ongoing developments in the Eastern Growth Zone, including the developments at Ingenium Parc.; maximise the potential for investment in Darlington and specifically supporting improved accessibility to Darlington Station and sustainable travel to the north-west growth zone (Faverdale and West Park); maximise the Council's opportunity to bid for and deliver externally funded transport schemes; ensure that the Strategic Transport Plans for the Tees Valley meet the economic aspirations of the TVCA and seek to maximise the benefits for Darlington residents, visitors and businesses; and to enable local people, businesses and organisations to shape the Darlington Transport Plan.

Private Sector Environmental Crime Enforcement

12. Cabinet has agreed that a contract be entered into with a private sector company to provide enforcement services for litter and dog fouling offences.

13. As part of the 2016 Medium Term Financial Plan the Council agreed to review the use of private sector environmental crime enforcement, tackling in particular litter. Officers and Members visited two local authorities that used private sector enforcement companies and feedback from those authorities was generally favourable. It was proposed therefore to tender and enter into a contract with a private sector company, initially to provide a six months' trial for litter and dog fouling offences.
14. The contract will cover HR, financial and legal implications; procurement advice; and it was also agreed different arrangements will be applied to those young people under 18 years of age who committed litter or dog fouling offences.
15. Cabinet also discussed education in tackling litter and dog fouling offences and agreed this was very important as was the discarding of dog bags. We also discussed the location of these bins; repeat offenders; arrangements for vulnerable people; and parking on grass verges.
16. It was also agreed to remove the existing early payment arrangement, and the fine for litter and dog fouling would be set at £75.

Sports Development

17. The Sheltered Housing Programme engaged with 120 people in 2017, with a total of 2,912 attendances at sessions.
18. In addition to weekly physical activity sessions, the Sports Development Team have engaged with residents to provide different events, including: choirs, dance shows, Dogs Trust and ukulele lessons.
19. Eastbourne Sports Complex continues to work closely with new providers, holding monthly 'Meet My Mascot' sessions and weekly 'Messy Play' sessions.

Events

20. Despite the inclement weather over the Easter period the 'Easter Eggstravaganza' went well. Events took place in the Dolphin Centre and Indoor Market while street theatre paraded throughout the Town Centre, visiting shops and encouraging people to participate in the 'Town Centre Egg Hunt' which was supported by Newcastle Building Society. The Cornmill, Queen Street and Binns also held their own events during the weekend.
21. A Facebook page has been established for Town Centre businesses.
22. TGI Media has been appointed to coordinate the #lovedarlo campaign on behalf of the Council and local businesses.

Darlington Hippodrome

23. The Hippodrome has been awarded Artsmark Partnership Status, which up-skills the Theatre Team to support settings (schools) on their Artsmark journey and enables children and young people to access a high-quality arts and cultural education.
24. The Engagement Team began a series of work experience placements for young people from local schools, during which they will receive their Arts Award, a formal qualification which can be very valuable for future learning and career ambitions. Amongst the young people taking part are a group of students from Beaumont Hill School, who are visiting the Theatre regularly.
25. A new temporary part time post has been created (funded from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to help deliver the HLF activity plan. The funding also provides heritage training which will benefit the whole team.
26. A new exhibition, created by Set Design students from Cleveland College of Art and Design, opened in the Gillian Dickinson Gallery/atrium display cabinet. The students were tasked with designing a stage set for shows which feature in the opening season or which have particular relevance to the Hippodrome.
27. An exhibition called 'On the Street Where You Live' opened in the Catherine Cookson Gallery, featuring photography from Peter Robinson of Eye of the Tyne Photography. The exhibition documents the stories of local residents in the Parkgate/Borough Road area and their connections to the Theatre over the years.
28. Arriva has generously provided sponsorship for the ticket stock of the Theatre and has offered opportunities to promote the Theatre through its bus network.
29. Some very good ticket sales figures have been achieved, including packed houses for 'Blood Brothers', 'The Play That Goes Wrong' and the one night productions, 'Smokie', 'Stewart Lee' and 'Madama Butterfly'.
30. We continue to receive excellent feedback from audiences and visiting companies alike, who have commented they are incredibly impressed with the restoration of the Theatre and the companies are particularly grateful for the improvements to dressing rooms and back stage facilities.

Audience Development

31. The 'Noisy Daughters' event at The Hullabaloo on 3 March 2018 aimed to teach and inspire the next generation and lead the way to equality in music. Despite the inclement weather, the programme, which included a song writing workshop, a panel discussion (including BBC Radio and Narc Magazine representation) and an evening of live performance, was enthusiastically received and was featured on Vogue magazine's website.
32. Darlington based music collective, 'Tracks', has recently been awarded an Arts Council England grant to support further musical activity in the Town. The grant will

support female focused music project 'Tea with Tracks', encompassing informal music industry advice sessions and a new, multi-venue, multi genre music festival, 'Last Train Home Festival', which will take place on 22 September 2018 in and around Darlington's train station. Creative Darlington supported Tees Music Alliance in developing the successful proposal.

33. The strategic arts budget will allocate £1,500 to the proposal which has secured additional budget from Arts Council England and additional sources.

Visual Art

34. Helen Winthorpe-Kendrick's 'Beginnings and Endings' exhibition at Crown Street Library ran from 31 March 2018 to 17 May 2018 with 2,653 visits to the exhibition. It included original works in textiles, cards, bags and a screen. Around 50 people attended an artist's talk at the exhibition opening and the Council secured commission from sales from this exhibition.
35. Now based at The Bridge, the Community Art Project is part of the Council's Services for People and is funded and managed as part of the Adult Learning Disability Service.
36. The solo exhibition by Roz Hall installed at the Town Hall exhibition space on 10 February 2018 will continue until 18 May 2018. The next exhibition by Darlington based Adam Plumb, will be promoted within Darlington Arts Festival 2018.

Head of Steam

37. On 18 February we held a LEGO event in conjunction with Brick Alley LUG. The event was extremely popular with over 2,600 visitors to the Museum in one day.
38. Thanks to an exciting and varied events and exhibitions programme, alongside a refreshed marketing campaign, the Museum welcomed over 37,500 users from April 2017 to February 2018. This is a 22 per cent increase compared to the same period last year (April 2016/February 2017).
39. We had 197 children visit in February and 314 in March; this included students from Greenfields Community College in Newton Aycliffe who are working with students from Amiens.
40. 'Station Scamps' (our weekly session for under-fives) brings in new visitors to the Museum with a range of railway themed activities.
41. We re-launched our Dementia Café on 21 February and 27 people attended. The café takes place on the third Wednesday of every month. This ties into our regular café run by The Links every Wednesday, so visitors can stay and enjoy lunch.

42. Our new exhibition 'Snack on the Track' opened on 10 March. Featuring loans from private lenders and the National Railway Museum, the exhibition charts the history of railway catering.

Environmental Services

43. The additional resources recently approved by Cabinet are now in place, which will mean:
- (a) Street cleansing in back lanes will be cleansed once a week, as opposed to fortnightly;
 - (b) Additional road channel sweeping throughout the Borough;
 - (c) Increased litter picking on key arterial routes into the Town and the hotspots;
 - (d) Increased frequency of litter bin emptying and larger bins in some locations;
 - (e) Improved response times to fly tipping and ad-hoc work;
 - (f) Grass cutting returned to a 10 to 15 day cycle, as opposed to the 5 to 30 day cycle; and
 - (g) Increased floral displays in key locations.
44. The Council has once again entered Northumbria in Bloom with a focus on the Town Centre and a kilometre radius, including: South Park, Green Park, Stanhope Green and a number of the smaller sites, such as the Buddhist Garden and Pocket Park. First judging took place on 18 April with summer judging taking place in July.

Councillor Nick Wallis
Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio