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**LEADER'S OVERVIEW**

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**Cabinet**

1. Cabinet, at its recent meetings, has made some important decisions to facilitate the growth of jobs and the construction of new housing for the people of Darlington. The development of a major logistics site at Symmetry Park alongside the A66, and the plans for a quality development at Stag House Farm are all signs of the confidence that developers have in working with the Council. But while development is rarely welcomed by those most immediately affected by it, it is important to remember that without housing to attract and retain new families, and without a wide range of jobs available, the Town will decline.
2. I was also pleased to note that Cabinet agreed a new Equalities objective and Policy and I trust that when training is made available to elected Members that colleagues will take full advantage to ensure we serve all sections of our community.

**Regional and Tees Valley Combined Authority Updates**

3. A draft Strategy for Transport across the Tees Valley is nearing completion, in time for wide public consultation. This Strategy must complement the work of each local authority on transport, as well dovetailing into the recent Transport for the North plans that I launched at Business Central. The draft TVCA plan was presented to the Transport Committee on 26 March 2018 and Tees Valley Combined Authority on 28 March 2018
4. An important milestone has been passed in respect of our key priority to enhance rail connections at Darlington Station. Network Rail has agreed to join me, the Tees Valley Combined Authority Mayor, and key rail operators in forming a Board to take the project forward. Work is progressing to develop the Masterplan into a firm costed Business Case and, with Network Rail's support, I believe that we can make a strong case to Government to fund the capital costs.
5. I attended a Transport for the North Member Consultation meeting in Leeds on 27 March 2018 to discuss the Fares Strategy. The first formal meeting of the statutory Transport for the North Board took place on 5 April 2018 in Liverpool at the Merseytravel Offices.
6. I have had a number of discussions and briefings with the Combined Authority in respect of the Durham Tees Valley Airport, and I anticipate a report coming to a Cabinet meeting very shortly.

7. On 18 April I was delighted to attend the relaunch and rebranding of the partnership with our Further Education partners: Stockton Riverside College, Redcar and Cleveland College, Darlington College and Hartlepool College of Further Education.
8. Statoil Vice President Halfdan Brustad's visit to Tees Valley gave a huge opportunity to secure jobs and investment in the region, and build on our credibility for future energy and renewable projects.
9. Mr Brustad is responsible for the Dogger Bank offshore wind farm project, which will deliver up to 4.8GW of power to the national grid. He met with senior officers and politicians from the region's local authorities to explore the wider socio-economic benefits of choosing the Tees Valley.
10. Darlington companies which could benefit from Statoil choosing Tees Valley for its operations and maintenance base include Modus and Deep Ocean: sub-sea surveys and inspection as well as installation of cables; and Subsea Innovation: launch equipment for sub-sea equipment.

### **Darlington Partnership**

11. The Partnership Board agreed at its meeting in March that an Assembly would be held in the Autumn focusing on the impact of welfare reforms.
12. The Welfare Reform Act of 2012 introduced a number of changes to the social security system.
13. With other elements of the legislation in place, Universal Credit will be fully rolled out in Darlington in June this year and the Partnership is facilitating an event in May for agencies who work with those potentially affected).
14. Welfare reform affects different types of households in very different ways. Low income households have been impacted with certain cohorts, such as families with children and households containing a person with a disability, particularly affected. Working households in receipt of tax credits are particularly likely to be highly affected by welfare reform, largely due to the cuts to work allowances. Private tenants are heavily affected by welfare reform in terms of real income loss.
15. The Assembly will aim to:
  - (a) Collectively gain a clear understanding how households in Darlington have been affected;
  - (b) Consider the measures that can be put in place by local services to mitigate against the negative impacts of Welfare Reform; this could include: Access to IT, Money Advice, Employment advice, Employability support, Financial Capability support and Affordable Credit; and
  - (c) Ensure that agencies are working effectively together.

## **General Updates**

16. I was pleased to attend and enjoy the Charity Ball hosted by the Mayor for her chosen charities St. Teresa's Hospice, Family Help and other local charities that support children and young people's mental Health. The Ball offered important opportunities to raise money for these good causes but also to facilitate networking in an informal environment.
17. I pay tribute to those Councillors who work hard within their wards to support and facilitate community efforts to tackle litter.

## **Community Safety**

18. The Community Safety Partnership Board met on 19 April 2018 where an update on work to tackle domestic abuse was presented and discussed. The Board continues to focus on agreed priorities of reducing re-offending, identifying vulnerable people and places, supporting people to move from substance misuse to recovery and tackling anti-social behaviour, details of which are shown below.
19. Durham Constabulary, partners including the Council, local councillors and members of the community have recently commenced a programme of activity designed to increase social capital and reduce dependency on local services in Bank Top, Darlington. The programme facilitated by 'Mutual Gain' will involve a series of activities, including community engagement, personal coaching, participatory budgeting, focus groups, action learning sets and structured events which are aimed at building social capital which can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of a community.
20. Members will receive further updates in relation to reductions in crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

## **Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in the Private Rented Sector**

21. During recent months, concerns have been expressed regarding increased levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in private rented sector accommodation in Darlington. This has resulted in the Council working in partnership with the University of Teesside to complete a study to understand current trends around crime and disorder in the private rented sector, consider powers and legislation, identify good national practice and develop options for improved management and services in Darlington.

## **Town Centre Begging**

22. A multi-agency problem solving group, under the chair of Chief Inspector Sue Robinson, is currently tackling the problems associated with begging in Darlington Town Centre. Recent reports suggest that the incidents associated with begging during daylight hours has reduced, however, intelligence is now suggesting that there is a problem linked to begging and the night-time economy.

23. A number of joint actions around support, intelligence development, targeted initiatives and operations, campaigns, national best practice and enforcement are currently being explored by the group who remain accountable to the Community Safety Partnership.

### **Darlington Youth Justice Plan 2018/19**

24. Darlington Youth Offending Service is now consulting partners regarding service priorities for the Youth Justice Plan 2018/19. Areas under consideration include the development of audit, inspection and performance frameworks, evaluation of intervention activity (supported by Durham University), desistance and strength based approaches, new preventative programmes, working with schools, the introduction of voluntary mentors, supporting victims more effectively, exploring income generation and improved integration with local services.
25. The plan will be prepared and presented for approval at the Darlington Youth Offending Service Management Board in May, 2018.

**Bill Dixon**  
**Leader**