

COUNCIL
16 JULY 2020

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

Council's Response to COVID19

1. Council will have seen the detailed report on the Council's response on the Cabinet agenda, and many references are included in my Cabinet colleagues' reports, so I will not go into the detail, but allow them to highlight the great work of Council, partners and volunteers.
2. I would like to use my report to thank all the Council staff, partners and volunteers for their work during the pandemic so far. I would also like to say thank you to my Cabinet colleagues, some who are new to post, for their leadership in responding to the pandemic thus far, as we all understand this challenge is far from over. Colleagues have worked tirelessly with our dedicated officers to deliver appropriate and much needed decisions; to respond in very short timescales, after working with limited information, but making the best decision possible. It has been very tough, and for all of us, a steep learning curve given none of us have experienced anything like this before.
3. I think it is key that the Council continues to give leadership to the pandemic response, and I and Cabinet colleagues will be promoting messages about staying safe and reminding people that the virus has not gone away, and that the releasing of lockdown is conditional on us all abiding by the guidance. Outbreaks in other parts of the country should be warnings to us all.

Planning for Recovery

4. We have been taking steps to return Council services to "normal" as part of our recovery planning, but there are much larger challenges ahead.
5. Recovery is the responsibility of a wide variety of partners, locally and nationally and we will be working collectively to achieve recovery. At the present time, not all the information is available or the plans in place, so this is why Cabinet have withheld the Council Plan it referred to Council earlier in the year, to allow time to review it in light of COVID19.
6. Early indications suggests significant social impacts as a result of unemployment and job insecurity, and key to part of the recovery planning will be working to alleviate, as far as possible, with available resources the impacts on the community of Darlington.
7. The Council's long-term ambition, reflected in our draft Council Plan, to grow the economy for the benefit of all in the Borough, will continue to be our driving force, but achieving such ambition, may well take longer, and require different interventions, but as a Council and Borough, we must continue to aim high to

achieve the success for Darlington despite these significant setbacks of COVID19.

Save our Loco Campaign

8. I am working cross-party with the political group leaders in Darlington, rail partners, local press and officers on the campaign to retain Locomotion No 1 in Darlington, where it rightfully belongs. We are lobbying senior politicians to support our cause from all the main political parties and will be relaunching the public campaign in the near future.

Strategic Transport

9. The Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan is now adopted and work to develop programmes, projects and initiatives to deliver the outcomes are being progressed. There have been a number of initiatives and announcements to support Active Travel in light of COVID-19 and all local authorities and the Combined Authority are working together to put credible applications into government.
10. The Darlington Station Improvement Scheme is progressing, design work on the new station interchanges are being progressed by the Council in parallel with the process to acquire the land needed to deliver the improvements. Network Rail are progressing the design of the rail station and track elements of the project. An integrated project team reports progress to the Project Board that includes myself, Department for Transport, TVCA, Network Rail and Rail Industry representatives. When the development work further advanced more public engagement will be undertaken.
11. A business case for Darlington Northern Link Road continues to be developed, design work and ecological surveys are progressing to inform the design. Further public engagement is anticipated later this year with the business case expected to be completed early next year. Strategic Transport projects have long development and lead-in periods into national programmes and the business case will be used to seek entry into a future national fund or programme.

Councillor Mrs Heather Scott OBE
Leader of the Council Portfolio