

**COUNCIL
26 NOVEMBER 2020**

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Local Services Portfolio.

Highway Maintenance Schemes

2. Despite the pandemic the Council is on track to deliver one of the largest annual programmes of highway maintenance to improve the Borough's streets. An additional £500k of Council funding and an additional £1.274m of Government funding has significantly increased the money available and the Council has accelerated delivery of this programme during COVID.
3. Around 16 significant maintenance schemes are being delivered across the Borough and over 72 streets are also being surfaced (microasphalt) with 24 of these having significant deep patching repairs before the micro-asphalt is applied. This year approximately 16km of streets were restored using this treatment.
4. Highway Maintenance schemes ongoing:
 - (a) Micro-Asphalt: 69 Sites – (16.025km)
 - (b) Hercules Street (Back Lane): Reconstruction (0.070km)
 - (c) Bates Avenue (Footway): Footway Reconstruction (0.230km)
 - (d) Cleveland Avenue: Carriageway Reconstruction/Recycling (0.490km)
5. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) Stanhope Road South/Coniscliffe Road, West Street: Carriageway reconstruction (0.260km)
 - (b) Victoria Embankment: Drainage/Channel Works (0.450km)
 - (c) A68 West Auckland Road: Carriageway Reconstruction (2.210km)
 - (d) C38 Sadberge Road/Middleton Road: Carriageway Haunching (5.210km)
6. Highway maintenance schemes complete:
 - (a) Patching Prior to Micro-asphalt (Various sites) – 31 locations
 - (b) Fenby Avenue: Carriageway reconstruction/Recycling (0.250km)
 - (c) Barnes Road: Carriageway resurfacing (0.140km)
 - (d) A67 Merrybent: Carriageway resurfacing (0.460km)
 - (e) A67 Yarm Road (Morton Palms): Carriageway resurfacing (0.720km)
 - (f) Surface Dressing: four Sites (9.650km)

Highway Improvement Schemes

7. The Rethinking Victoria Road scheme has commenced on-site. This scheme will improve the link between the Station and town centre, improving the walking and cycling facilities, the public realm and the environment. This will link into further improvements to create a new transport interchange and public realm improvements at the Station entrance as part of the Darlington Station Project

8. The scheme will be delivered in six phases to try to minimise disruption. A temporary one-way system is in place to allow for safer working whilst maintaining access for residents, business and people going to the station.
9. The works to upgrade the back lane adjacent to the Royal Mail sorting office have been completed, as have the works around the bridge over the river Skerne. We are currently carrying out footway improvements on the section of Victoria Road from Victoria Embankment to Clifton Road. This phase involves footway improvements on the south side of the road, followed by footway widening works on the north side.

Transport for the Return to School and College

10. Following advice from Public Health England and the Departments for both Transport and Education transport measures for pupils and students returning to school and college were planned and put into place.
11. Due to the continued reduced capacity on public transport to enable social distancing between passengers, additional duplicate bus services were put into operation on key services used by children and young people to access education. Planning was done in collaboration with North Yorkshire, Durham and Stockton Councils as well as with the bus operators, colleges and schools. Further funding has been allocated to TVCA to enable these additional services to operate until Christmas ensuring pupils and students can access education by public transport.
12. In addition information campaigns were run to encourage people to follow Government advice to walk or cycle to school where possible; to park further away from the school gates to reduce congestion outside schools (on the basis that travel by car was expected to increase due to the reduced capacity on buses); and to wear face coverings when travelling by public transport. These campaigns were run across the Tees Valley. In addition, an influencer campaign was run to encourage young people to wear face coverings on the basis that bus operators identified that compliance was low amongst this demographic.

Cycle Parking

13. A review has been undertaken of cycle parking in the town centre. There are currently 200 spaces available to the public - 140 spaces on-street, 40 in the covered store on the town hall forecourt and parking for a further 20 at Bike Stop on Skinnergate. A programme of works is being drafted to retain the same number of stands but to relocate some and maintain others. There will also be improvements to signage and information to help people find cycle parking near their destination. Additional locations will be identified if demand increases.

Stockton and Darlington Railway Walking and Cycling Route

14. The works to improve the section of the walking and cycling route along the Stockton and Darlington Railway alignment between the A66 and Mill Lane in Middleton St George has been completed.

Head of Steam

15. The “Keep the Loco in Darlo” campaign has begun with an online petition, which has been promoted to all visitors in person and virtually. The campaign was launched on local TV with a socially distanced filming session involving St John’s CE Academy in Darlington and Chris Lloyd.
16. During September and early October, staff worked with five different schools from Darlington, Stockton and Middlesbrough, and a further two schools during November. This work was completed via a combination of outreach to the school, loans boxes, local area walks and the use of our new digital resources. A total of 393 children have been engaged so far, with COVID-secure procedures in place.

Creative Darlington

17. The ‘Tracks! Hark!’ online event featured readings, interviews with authors and a live music and writing workshop opportunity within one programme. A screening of parts of this programme was shared live online on 11 October 2020 and received great feedback. Creative Darlington provided budget support and Darlington Library service enabled parts of the screening to be filmed at Darlington Library.
18. In 2019/20 Creative Darlington offered budget to support a new organisation, ‘Making It Happen’, to develop a proposal to work with members of the public in Darlington. The group have developed their practice, which looks to encourage positive health outcomes through creative engagement. They have developed a temporary space within a unit in The Cornmill Centre and recently secured grant support from Arts Council England’s Emergency Fund to support their ongoing practice in Darlington.

Libraries

19. Over 200 entries were received from children as part of our Reading Rollercoaster Summer Reading Challenge. There were 7 winners aged between 3 and 11 years who won parties at the Gamers Lounge, at home mascot parties, book vouchers and a year’s membership to the Head of Steam Railway Museum. Primary Schools are being offered book boxes from our library containing specially selected titles according to the school’s requirements.
20. Friday 23 October 2020 marked the 135th birthday of Darlington Library. A video was produced showcasing a collection of historic photographs of the building alongside more recent images. Throughout the week anyone who borrowed from the library was placed into a draw to win a book voucher.

Tornado

21. On 27 September 2020, the Mayors of Darlington and Stockton launched the 5-year countdown to 2025 with a COVID-secure ride on Tornado, in partnership with the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust, culminating with the launch of the countdown clock at the Head of Steam.
22. To honour the occasion, and Darlington’s wider plans for the 200th celebrations, A1 Trust’s Tornado stopped on Skerne Bridge to mirror the famous Dobbin painting on

the bridge. Drone footage captured the moment and the day received coverage on BBC Look North.

Darlington Hippodrome

23. Darlington Hippodrome have been successful in a bid for £1,000,000 from the Cultural Recovery Fund which is being administrated by Arts Council England. The money will support the running costs of the theatre between October to the end of March 2021.
24. Since reopening the doors of the Hippodrome on 7 September 2020, the theatre has delivered a series of socially distanced engagement activities including dance and drama classes, art workshops, tours of the building, book groups and classic cinema screenings.

Environmental Services

Waste Services

25. Waste Services continue to operate with additional resources allocated to ensure teams are able to adhere to Government guidelines in relation to social distancing.

Garden Waste Collection Service

26. The Garden Waste Collection Service was initially delayed due to the onset of the pandemic and therefore operates until week commencing 14 December 2020, when this year's season ends.

Street Cleansing

27. A three-month trial of additional resources allocated to the collection of fly tips from rear lanes and other areas was due to cease in September 2020. Due to the success of the trial, it has now been extended until the end of June 2021.
28. A further additional street orderly funded from the Futures Fund has been allocated to the periphery of the town centre to ensure all roads leading towards the centre are clean and tidy.
29. In addition to the periphery of the town centre, the operative is also to sweep the Northgate Ward on a fortnightly basis, enhancing resources in that area as part of the ongoing Northgate Initiative.

Grounds Maintenance

30. The current grass cutting season concluded at the end of October and the teams were then be reassigned to the winter programme of pruning and cutting back hedges, brambles, shrubs etc.

Winter Maintenance

31. The Winter Maintenance season commenced on the 5 October 2020. All vehicles, staff and rock salt are in place to ensure the safety of residents and visitors to the

town during the winter period.

Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio