

**COUNCIL**  
**15 JULY 2021**

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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO**

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

**Planning and Development Management**

2. The Planning enforcement/compliance service currently has 84 planning enforcement cases under investigation and 91 Cases have been satisfactorily resolved by the Monitoring and Compliance Officer since the beginning of August.
3. Since the beginning of August 2020, 803 applications have been received of which 28 are categorised as major. 603 decisions have been made in this period, including Committee Decisions, Chairs Delegated and Delegated decisions.
4. Progress is being made with regard to the residential/commercial development in Skinnergate. The appointed architectural agents have been able to move the project forward to planning application stage. It is anticipated that a decision will be made in July for this exiting transformational project.
5. Enforcement notices have been served on two gypsy sites which have been appealed against to be heard by hearing, and in addition, an enforcement notice has been served on unauthorised activity including the stationing of a caravan near Sadberge. Compliance has been secured in both cases.
6. Direct action in default being taken on a property in Montrose Street is nearing completion. An appropriate charge on the property will be made to recover the Council's costs.
7. Following a briefing with Members, pre-application negotiations are now complete and an application has been received regarding the North Road Railway Station scheme.

**Environmental Health**

8. The Environmental Health Department responded to 1709 requests for service in Q4.
9. The main categories of these requests are:
  - (a) Food 140
  - (b) Licensing 49
  - (c) Noise 166
  - (d) Planning Enquiries 90
  - (e) Refuse 90
  - (f) Pest 207
  - (g) Personal Search 484

(h) Covid 327

10. Additionally, the Commercial Team carried out the following proactive Food Inspections:
  - (a) Food Safety 30
  - (b) Food Standards 22
11. To support the Council's healthy weight plan, to support every child to feel emotionally and physically healthy, by providing opportunities to play and have access to and enjoy healthy foods, the public and environmental health teams are encouraging restaurants and cafes to offer families a wider choice of healthy food and receive recognition in the form of a healthy family catering award certificate.
12. Meals eaten out or from takeaways are usually much higher in fat, sugar, salt, and calories. A meal deal can often seem to be convenient and value for money but can increase the food ordered and consumed. Swapping the healthier meal deal items with healthier options can make it easier to eat well out of home, within budget.
13. With 'out of home' food often contributing to high calorie intakes, food business options can play a part in our children's health. With this in mind, two proactive restaurants in Darlington - Uno Momento and Al Forno - have worked with the Council to improve their healthy offering in their children's menus, with their meals not exceeding government guidelines for calories and portion sizing for children under the age of 11.
14. Both restaurants also achieved the gold extension of the award by incorporating techniques to support behaviour change, such as including fruits and vegetables on the menu and encouraging healthy drinks.
15. During the course of the Coronavirus Pandemic Officers from Environmental Health, Licensing and the Town Centre Management team have worked together to provide written guidance documents at each step of the Government's Roadmap.
16. The documents were hand delivered and were supported by face-to-face visits to the management of the businesses.
17. A Review and Update Report on the Council's Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy has been placed on the Council's website. This report gives an update of the work undertaken by Environmental Health from 2013 onwards, identifies the changes in guidance and approach taken since the publication of the 2013 Strategy and outlines the aims and work programme going forward.

### **Building Control**

18. The Building Control section work is continuing as previously with some increases in: submitted applications, requests for inspections and actions due to unauthorised works, dangerous structures interventions due to lack of maintenance, and the work around issuing special safety certificates for the August events at the Arena. The section is also in the process of being ISO 9001 accredited through the LABC.

### **Darlington Towns Fund**

19. The aims and purpose of the Towns Fund is to drive the sustainable economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth.
20. Improvement works within the Yards is progressing, which includes enhanced public realm and seating areas, new doors, windows, guttering and downpipes, new lighting and new paintwork and artwork, which will encourage people to visit the ever-growing number of independent shops and allow people to dwell for a time in these attractive historic yards.
21. The acquisition of 142/144 Northgate has now been completed and signifies the first step towards the Council's intention of seeking to acquire the remaining units which make up the whole of the former Edward Pease residence. Discussions regarding the acquisition of further premises on Northgate are continuing.
22. Progress is underway with Stage 2 of the Towns Fund which involves the completion of business cases and submission of summaries to government.

### **Victorian Indoor Market**

23. Work is progressing well with the refurbishment of Darlington's Indoor Market. Phase 1, which includes the provision of new public toilets, bar, performance space, community dining area, and a selection of various street food vendors. Phase 2 which is the redevelopment of the traditional market area has commenced which will see overall improvements to the trading area. Phase 3, the Temperate Garden, has now received planning approval and consideration is being given to when works are best timed to commence.

### **Business Investment Team Update**

24. Darlington Borough Council have administered the various financial support schemes for business on behalf of the Government.

25. The table below shows the number of grants awarded and overall values for the national Local Restrictions Support Grants:

<b>Local Restriction Support Grants (October 2020 – March 2021)</b>					
	<b>Applications</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Declined</b>	<b>Awaiting Decision</b>	<b>Amount Paid</b>
<b>LRSO Open</b>	364	218	140	0	£192,075.70
<b>LRSO (Closed Addendum) National Lockdown</b>	1,099	870	229	0	£1,336,122.00
<b>LRSO Tier 3</b>	461	265	196	0	£427,264.43
<b>Christmas Support Payment for Pubs</b>	77	51	26	0	£51,000.00
<b>LRSO Tier 4/National Lockdown</b>	1,279	909	369	1	£4,416,912.37
<b>Closed Business Lockdown Payment</b>	893	893			£4,028,285.71
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>4,173</b>	<b>3,206</b>	<b>960</b>		<b>£10,451,660.21</b>

26. As part of the March 2021 Budget, the Government set out a new wave of support measure for the small businesses, including Restart Grants to support local economies as they emerge from the pandemic and lockdown restrictions and commence a path of recovery. The awards so far are as follows:

<b>Restart Grants</b>				
<b>Applications</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Declined</b>	<b>Awaiting Decision</b>	<b>Amount Paid</b>
<b>901</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>£5,666,064.00</b>

27. In addition to the national government support schemes, Darlington Borough Council was allocated £3m for delivering local discretionary grants. The table below shows the current status of grant awards from this fund.

<b>Additional Restriction Grants</b>					
	<b>Applications</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Declined</b>	<b>Awaiting Decision</b>	<b>Amount Paid</b>
<b>ARG Phase I - Lockdown</b>	1,009	614	395	0	£1,851,574.17
<b>ARG Phase II - Recovery</b>		472			£1,095,910.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>1,009</b>	<b>1,086</b>			<b>£2,947,484.17</b>

28. So far, the number and value of Covid-19 business grants awarded via DBC since the start of the pandemic is as follows:

(a) 735 Small Business Grants	- £17,350,000
(b) 364 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants	- £ 6,520,000
(c) 105 Discretionary Grants	- £ 1,170,000
(d) 3,206 Local Restriction Support Grants	- £10,451,660

(e) 793 Restart Grants	- £ 5,666,064
(f) 1,086 Additional Restriction Grants	- £ 2,947,484

29. The total value of Covid-19 financial support grants awarded to Darlington businesses since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 is £44,105,208.

### **Local Plan**

30. The Local Plan Hearing sessions are now complete. The next stage will be the receipt of the Inspector's initial findings where modifications will be recommended to ensure the soundness of the Plan. The modifications will be placed on deposit for representations to be made, these representations can only be on the proposed modifications and not the whole Plan. Depending on the representations received the Inspector may decide to hold further hearing days but that is not necessarily the case.

31. The Inspector will then submit his final report with his recommendations on the soundness of the Plan (with the modifications). If the Inspector recommends the Plan is sound, a report will be prepared for Council to recommend Adoption of the Local Plan. A verbal update will be provided at Council.

### **Climate Change**

32. It is the intention to submit the Draft Climate Change Action Plan to the September Cabinet for consideration.

33. An annual report for 2020/21 has also been produced. This shows an emissions reduction of just under 1000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>. We have included an estimate of emissions from homeworking.

**Councillor Alan Marshall**  
**Economy Portfolio**