

COUNCIL
15 JULY 2021

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.

Proposed Waiting Restrictions on George Stephenson Way – Objections

2. On-street parking on George Stephenson Drive has resulted in road safety concerns being raised for a number of years. The on-street parking causes visibility issues daily, which result in road safety concerns for residents and drivers entering and leaving the estate.
3. Cabinet considered two objections that had been received to a proposal for waiting restrictions on George Stephenson Drive and agreed to set aside those objections.
4. Introducing the waiting restrictions will improve the traffic flow, visibility and road safety of vehicles entering and leaving George Stephenson Drive.

Rethinking Victoria Road

5. Works are ongoing to complete the section of Victoria Road from Clifton Road to the station. Service diversions have been carried out to facilitate the installation of tree pits and the works to widen the footway has commenced. A surfacing contractor has been procured with the surfacing due to commence on 23 July and last approximately one week.
6. The new signals are installed but will not become operational until the surfacing works are complete.

Highway Maintenance Schemes

7. The annual programme of highway maintenance has commenced with a significant programme of works over the summer months. The Council will continue to address road condition and a large programme of residential streets is being included again this year. 52 streets are included in the microasphalt programme covering over 11km of road.
8. The Council has also launched the “Report it” function. An online reporting function for highways and street lighting issues. The map based system allows residents to report issues easily, get updates and also allows people to see if the issues has already been reported. Further promotion and integration of this system will follow to improve customer service and efficiency.
9. Highway Maintenance schemes complete:
 - (a) Stanhope Road South/Coniscliffe Road, West Street: Carriageway reconstruction (0.260km)

10. Highway Maintenance schemes on site:
 - (a) Carriageway Patching Contract (22 locations)
 - (b) Unc Victoria Embankment: Kerbing/Drainage Works (0.500km)
 - (c) Pendleton Road/Arkendale Street Back Street: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.128km)
 - (d) A6072 Heighington By-Pass: Carriageway Reconstruction (1.393km)
 - (e) B6279 Tornado Way: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.280km)
11. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) A68 West Auckland Road: Carriageway Reconstruction (2.330km)
 - (b) A67 Merrybent -Phase 2: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.561km)
 - (c) Carriageway Micro-Asphalt Contract (52 locations, 11.124km)

Climate Change

12. The Council continues to expand its fleet of electric vehicles as they come up for replacement. 9 new electric vans have been added to the fleet making a total of 17.

Head of Steam

13. A new exhibition, 'All Aboard', opened on Tuesday 18 May. The exhibition, supported by NPO and co-curated by local children at Mowden Primary School and Reid Street Primary School, invites visitors to discover more about their favourite railway stories both old and new.

Creative Darlington

14. Creative Darlington is supporting the following festivals and programmes:
 - (a) Tracks (Community Interest Company) 'Mish Mash' and 'Last Train Home' music festivals.
 - (b) Neighbourhood Watch Stilts International (street theatre company) 'Insectopolis' programmes in Darlington Town Centre.
 - (c) Theatre Hullabaloo's 'Hullabaloo in the Park' programme in South Park.
 - (d) A satellite activity at the Head of Steam Railway Museum as part of the Middlesbrough Art Weekender 2021 programme.
15. A number of these programmes have been offered support from Arts Council England or Tees Valley Combined Authority, in addition to backing from Darlington Borough Council.

Libraries

16. The reopening of libraries is progressing, offering computer use and study space at Darlington Library, as well as book borrowing.

World Book Night

17. Darlington was one of ten authorities to successfully bid for 1000 copies of Matt Haig's 'The Midnight Library' for World Book Night. Copies of the book were given to groups of key workers, businesses and services to gift as a "random act of

kindness”, including COVID centres and the Arriva buses. The books were also gifted to young adults at Carmel College and to young adults in care and care leavers.

Reading Friends

18. The Library is providing a “window to the library” for a group of elderly, digitally excluded residents in Darlington. After a successful grant application, tablets have been purchased and will be loaned to a selected group of older adults who are using the home delivery service. Support will be provided by Library staff through the programme. Reminiscence boxes are also being piloted to support wellbeing in older people.

Darlington Hippodrome

19. The Hippodrome reopened on 17 May in line with the Government’s roadmap and is currently running a programme of classes, classic films, tours and encore West End screenings. The first live show is Darlington Operatic Society’s show ‘Come Back Home’ (24–27 June) with audience members booking on a 1 metre+ socially distanced seating plan.
20. A pantomime press launch was scheduled for Friday 25 June where it was announced that Faye Tozer (Member of British pop group Steps/Strictly Come Dancing) will be starring as the Fairy Godmother in Cinderella this Christmas. It is anticipated that the publicity will generate a boost in ticket sales and create a renewed excitement for the return of panto to the Hippodrome.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

21. The Government Welcome Back Fund 2021-22: £94,000 has been completed and submitted for review to support Animation and Marketing of the Town centre.
22. Within the Market square a roller rink and other sporting events will occur throughout the summer holidays, the roller rink has been booked for 19-30 July and will be accompanied by exciting activities taking place each Wednesday for young people.

Environmental Services

Grounds Maintenance

23. The Council is regularly increasing the number of wildflower areas located around the Borough. This summer, there is a total of 67 sections of wildflowers spread over 35 different locations, compared to 42 sections of wildflowers spread over 18 locations in 2020.

Garden Waste

24. The third year of the Garden Waste Subscription Service commenced in April, with 8,225 subscriptions at the time of writing. This is a further increase of 13 per cent on 2020 as the service continues to grow.