

COUNCIL
30 SEPTEMBER 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. Throughout the summer there have been challenges in delivering services as staff have been taking annual leave which was compounded by other staff having to self-isolate as close contacts. However overall by prioritising services and moving staff around to meet demand on the whole, services were maintained throughout the period.

Highway Maintenance Schemes

2. The majority of the highway maintenance programme is undertaken through the summer when conditions are most conducive. This year over £2m has been invested in numerous schemes to improve the condition of our roads. The programme always involves a variety of solutions, whether it be full reconstruction of roads or overlaying roads to pro-long their life the Council will look at the most appropriate solution for the problem. This year a further 52 residential street have been treated covering over 11km to improve the condition of residents' streets to prevent potholes forming. Over recent years we have seen the number of potholes needing repair reduced by one third and we will continue to work to reduce this further. As part of our improvement plans, we have introduced a map based Report It system to help members of the public report problems simply and be kept up date with progress. This year we have also undertaken a number of schemes involving the recycling of material. We have managed to recycle 3600tons of material this year which would normally have been sent to landfill at a cost to the authority of over £160k.
3. Highway Maintenance schemes ongoing:
 - (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)
4. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) C38 Sadberge Road / Middleton Road: Carriageway Recycling (1.927km)
 - (b) Hewitson Road: Carriageway Recycling (0.3km)
5. Highway Maintenance Schemes completed:
 - (a) Carriageway Patching Contract (22 locations)
 - (b) Victoria Embankment: Kerbing/Drainage Works (0.500km)
 - (c) Pendleton Road/Arkendale Street Back Street: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.128km)
 - (d) A6072 Heighington Bypass: Carriageway Reconstruction (1.393km)
 - (e) B6279 Tornado Way: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.280km)

Head of Steam

6. On Track for Change, a new exhibition at Head of Steam was on display until 30 August 2021. Funded by Arts Council National Lottery Project Fund, artist Sophie de Oliveira Barata from the Alternative Limb Project, created a new installation inspired by the history of the railways. The unique piece brought together both art and technology and was accompanied by an exhibition exploring the history of artificial limb making by the railways.

Creative Darlington

7. Exhibitions in the gallery at Darlington Library were available to the public from 21 June with Jonny Lancaster's paintings and prints on display until 29 July 2021. Thanks to Darlington Cultural Volunteers for stewarding this exhibition. Dawn Broughton's 'A Dialogue with Age' exhibition was also on display until Thursday 23 September 2021.
8. Creative Darlington has supported filmmaker Mike Tweddle to commission fundraising services to develop a budget to produce one or more original films. These works are expected to explore aspects of Darlington's heritage, particularly the approaching 50th anniversary of Guru Boutique being open in the Borough, and Arthur Wharton's engagement with Darlington and legacy.

Climate Change

9. The Council has just received delivery of a further eight electric vans taking the total number of electric vehicles in the fleet to 17. All of the Council's van fleet will be changed to electric as they become due for renewal subject to suitable electric vehicle being available.
10. The C38 road between A67 and Sadberge has been maintained using recycling techniques. Whilst not suitable for all schemes in the borough this approach has saved 2781 tonnes of material being removed from site to a licensed tip. This is the equivalent of 146 wagons making the journey to the tip. The works are also carried out much quicker than conventional methods reducing the time that the diversion is in place reducing the additional miles generated following long diversions.

Libraries

Summer Reading Challenge

11. The Libraries offered children aged 0–16 an incentive to read over the summer. Children were able to borrow books to be entered into a draw to win one of a range of prizes including a Nintendo Switch, Harry Potter Lego Sets, a Fit Bit Watch and soft toys.

100 Book Challenge

12. The Libraries engaged with three primary schools. Collectively, Year 5 pupils in each school read "100 Books to Read before you're 11" as selected by Darlington Library Service. Feedback was immensely positive with teachers reporting a considerable increase in enthusiasm for reading. This scheme is now being offered to further primary schools to

contribute to positive literacy outcomes for Key Stage 2 pupils in Darlington.

Darlington Hippodrome

13. Darlington Operatic Society officially re-started live theatre events for a run of 6 performances with a socially distanced audience. Ticket sales were successful across the run and the theatre has since presented Horrible Histories (socially distanced). Following the ease of restrictions on 19 July, The Illegal Eagles and In the Night Garden were presented with a full capacity seating plan. Ticket sales continue to grow week on week and audience feedback on the COVID safety within the theatre has been positive.
14. The Autumn brochure has now been launched with a host of new shows announced for the Autumn and Spring seasons. Highlights include, We Will Rock You, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and the return of Pantomime with Faye Tozer of Steps starring in Cinderella.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

15. An 'Enjoy Darlington' TV advert was created and aired on television from 7 August 2021. In addition, £94,000 was approved from the Welcome Back Fund 2021-22 and allocation of spending confirmed to support further large-scale advertising across the region to attract new visitors.
16. The Darlington 10K took place on 1 August with over 1,000 participants running in the event. The weekend of 7-9 August saw the return of PRIDE and was followed by MISH MASH, Food Festival and R'n'B Festivals throughout the month.
17. In the Market Square, the Roller Rink was very successful and well-received with large numbers of children and families taking part. Team Extreme with a 9m skate ramp, Landmark Minigolf, cycling and climbing walls also took place over the summer holidays.

Environmental Services

Northumbria in Bloom

18. The Council welcomed the Northumbria in Bloom judges in July who visited the town to judge the town centre's public realm. Results are due at the end of September.

Garden Waste Service

19. The Garden Waste Service is now in its third year of operation. Since implementation in 2019, the service has increased subscriptions from 4,700 to 8,800 plus. The service has been very well received with no significant issues arising.

Winter Maintenance

20. The winter maintenance season for 2021/2022 commences the first week in October. Salt stocks have been renewed and vehicles prepared in readiness for the forthcoming season.

Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio