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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO**

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

**Introduction of Charging and Local Eligibility Criteria for the Self-Build Register**

2. Cabinet received a report outlining the statutory duties associated with the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as Amended) and in doing so noted that one of the duties was a requirement to provide serviced self-build plots to meet an identified need.
3. We also agreed the introduction of a charging schedule (to be reviewed on a regular basis) for inclusion on Part 1 of the Self-Build Register and the introduction of the eligibility criteria for inclusion on Part 1 of the Self-Build Register.
4. There is currently no fee to register so persons could have their name on more than one register in the Tees Valley, or wider area, which could result in an over-estimation of need. This could ultimately place a burden on several local authorities to provide serviced plots which would not all be required.
5. If left uncontrolled, the current arrangements could see wide interest in building self-build housing from persons with no local connection and it is felt that such plots should be directed towards genuine need within the Borough.
6. The introduction of a charge, albeit modest, would allow the authority to recover a small part of the cost of managing the register and associated work involved.

**Development Management and Environmental Health**

7. Planning permission has been granted for the following housing schemes :-
  - (a) 90 houses at Roundhill Road, Hurworth;
  - (b) 61 houses at Oak Tree, Middleton St George; and
  - (c) One supermarket and 12 affordable homes opposite Acorn Close, Middleton St George.
8. In addition, expansion plans have been agreed for the Raby Hunt in Summerhouse.
9. Significant housing applications at Coniscliffe Park and Middleton St George are yet to be determined.

10. Environmental Health has recently completed two prosecution cases for food hygiene offences :-

(a) **China Red, Gladstone Street -**

The Food Business Operator placed unsafe food on the market contrary to General Food Regulations 2004, Regulation 4 (a) as required by Article 14(1) of Regulation (EC) 178/2002. The offence was identified during the investigation of an outbreak of food poisoning involving illness to ten symptomatic customers and three staff who were confirmed to have been suffering from Salmonella Enteritis food poisoning which was most likely caused by the consumption of food at China Red. It was highly likely that cross contamination from the raw egg product was the likely mode of transmission of the infection.

**Outcome:** Fined £8,000, costs £1,225, victim surcharge £120

(b) **Star Pizza, 89 Victoria Road-**

Offences were identified as part of a routine inspection. Three offences were identified:-

- (i) The premises were not kept clean as required by Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Annex II Chapter I Paragraph 1, contrary to Regulation 19 of the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.
- (ii) Equipment in the premises were not kept clean as required by Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Annex II Chapter V Paragraph 1(a) contrary to Regulation 19 of the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.
- (iii) Staff were not wearing suitable, clean and where necessary, protective clothing as required by Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, Art. 4(2), Annex II, Chapter VIII, paragraph 1 contrary to Regulation 19 of the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.

**Outcome:** Fined £2,000, costs £562, victim surcharge £120

11. Environmental Health is delivering a two year project on behalf of and funded by Public Health. The project is to have two main elements :-

(a) A food related element centred around the following elements of the Draft Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan 2017–2022 :-

- (i) To transform the environment so that healthier choices are available in the provision of out of home food.
- (ii) To transform the environment by supporting the public sector to lead by example with food choices.
- (iii) Increase making healthier choices easier by delivering an awareness raising campaign including the provision of allergen information in all sectors.
- (iv) Additionally to transform the environment by supporting the Care Sector, for all age groups, to lead by example with food choices.

- (b) An air quality element chosen from one or more of the following:-
- (i) Health impacts and pollutant concentrations from short term exposure outside schools linked to pick up and drop off.
  - (ii) Indoor air quality associated with the use of wood burning stoves especially with regard to PM<sub>2.5</sub> with this being a UK Public Health Outcomes Framework indicator. Linked to this could be a review of smoke control areas as parts of the Borough are not currently included such as Middleton St George.
  - (iii) Air quality inside vehicles compared to road side.
  - (iv) Further investigation into NO<sub>2</sub> diffusion tube results at the North Road Station and Blackwell. This work will be undertaken anyway as part of our obligations under Local Air Quality Management (LAQM).

## **Local Plan**

12. Work is ongoing assessing the 1,350 plus comments. A report will be considered at Cabinet in December and subsequently by Council in January, prior to publicising the proposed submission version of the Local Plan early in the New Year.

## **Town Centre**

13. Over the Summer months, a significant amount of work has taken place within the Town Centre which, due to the cross-cutting nature a number of initiatives, have been highlighted in other Portfolio reports. Work has focussed on implementing the Footfall Strategy, which includes increasing events, increasing and improving floral displays, employment of a Street Scene Team Leader, a review of wayfinding, as well as working in partnership with the Police to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime.
14. Street Angels was launched this month and work has started on collating information and evidence together for the Purple Flag scheme, which is a quality mark for town centres. The Christmas Lights Switch-on took place on 22 November, alongside a special Christmas Market as well as a significantly improved Christmas tree.
15. Planning is well underway on developing and building on this year's Events and Animation Strategy, working closely with a range of stakeholders and partners across the town centre for next year.
16. Examination of Town Centre private sector development opportunities along with recently commissioned pieces of evidence will help inform possible future development; areas under consideration include Skinnergate and the Yards; Crown Street and Northgate Street.
17. A Town Centre Marketing and Communications Group has been established over the last six months with a range of key stakeholders meeting every four weeks to develop a coherent approach to developing the profile and the content of Darlington's offer. Partners include the Cornmill and Queen Street Shopping

Centres, House of Fraser, Mercure Hotel, Arriva, The Hole in the Wall, TGI Media, Market Asset Management and Darlington Building Society, as well as the Dolphin Centre and Darlington Hippodrome. The Group works to produce joint marketing material (the Christmas brochure was distributed early November with a range of events throughout December) around key seasonal priorities, promotional offers and events/animation throughout the town centre. Furthermore, the group has also established the 'Love Darlo' platform through social media, which has proved a really strong engagement tool for retailers; TGI Media lead on this, working closely with the Town Centre Partnership and Events Manager. There is lots more potential with further marketing work ongoing including the production of a new town centre guide for visitors and a range of offers from retailers.

## **Business Week**

18. During this reporting period, the Business Investment Team have been proactively working on the planning and execution of 'Darlington Business Week'. This is the second annual Business Week, building upon the success of last year's event.
19. The main aim of the week was to increase business engagement with local businesses, to aid lead generation of business growth and investment projects in Darlington and to encourage more businesses to engage with the Council to highlight barriers to growth, which can be used to help shape and inform economic strategy.
20. There are a range of business support initiatives including access to capital grants to support expansion projects using monies held by the Combined Authority, through devolution and the SSI Task Force. Events were built around raising awareness to Darlington based businesses of the support available to them, to accelerate growth linked to job creation and retention.
21. A total of 16 events were delivered across the course of the week, including a Business Summit and Economic Briefing, a Jobs Fair and Finance and Grants for Business Growth event.
22. A wide range of business partners including the North East England Chamber of Commerce, the Tees Engineering Network, Darlington Business Club and the Tees Valley Business Compass service were also jointly involved in helping deliver events. This enabled a wider audience capture and showcasing of the strength of the business networks providing business support in Darlington.
23. The Jobs Fair attracted 765 residents and featured over 750 live vacancies from a range of employers, including EE, Deep Ocean, Arriva, Student Loans Company, Cummins and Sainsbury's. In addition, support providers such as Morrisons Trust, Job Centre Plus, Learning and Skills, Routes to Work and Tedco were on hand to assist those individuals who may find accessing the jobs market more difficult due to personal challenges.
24. A total of 452 attended business events across the week.

25. In terms of employment levels, latest figures (produced quarterly by the Office for National Statistics) show that Darlington currently has an unemployment rate of 5.2 per cent. This compares to the North East figure of 5.4 per cent and Great Britain at 4.2 per cent.

**Councillor Chris McEwan**  
**Economy and Regeneration Portfolio**