

**COUNCIL**  
**31 MARCH 2022**

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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 87 planning enforcement cases under investigation and 81 cases have been satisfactorily resolved by the Monitoring and Compliance Officer since the beginning of September.
3. Since the beginning of August 2020, 1271 applications have been received of which 44 are categorised as major. 926 decisions have been made in this period, including Committee Decisions, Chairs Delegated and Delegated Decisions.
4. Final negotiations have now concluded regarding the applications at the Railway Quarter with Historic England and other interest groups. Planning permission and Listed Building Consent has now been granted
5. A number of significant planning applications for housing are now anticipated from parties seeking to deliver significant housing numbers in the Borough. In addition, there are a number of applications already in the system which were awaiting the approval of the Local Plan. The Local Plan is now approved. Whilst it is anticipated that this will result in a significant number of applications for housing, all major developers have been contacted to explain that it is incumbent on them to clarify that their schemes comply with the requirements of the Local Plan before any decisions are taken.
6. Notices under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act [untidy land and buildings] have been served on a property in Skinnergate and Northgate House.

**Local Plan**

7. As Members will be aware, following receipt of a favourable report from the independent planning inspector, the Council adopted the Borough of Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 on 17 February 2022. The plan now carries full weight in the consideration of planning applications and replaces the 'saved' policies of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan 1997 (updated 2001) and the Darlington Core Strategy (2011).
8. All newly adopted plans are subject to a 6-week challenge period (until 1 April 2022) where an application can be made to the High Court to challenge any procedural deficiencies in the plan but does not enable challenge of specific proposals.
9. Work has commenced on the preparation of a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to accompany the Local Plan including Design Codes for Faverdale and

Skerningham Garden Villages, an updated Design of New Development SPD and an updated Planning Obligations SPD.

### **Climate Change**

10. Milestones for the coming financial year are almost all in place and these are what will be reported against in July and January. We have been slightly delayed by the Christmas and New Year break.
11. Our Climate Change Officer has also, sadly, decided that the role is not for her so has left. As she was still within her probationary period, HR has given us permission to go back to the second-choice candidate interviewed last year. We have made an offer and are waiting on references.
12. The feasibility study report on two potential district heat networks has been finalised. We are examining the findings of that report and will make recommendations to Council in due course.

### **Environmental Health**

13. The Environmental Health Section has responded to 1239 requests for service in Quarter 3 2021/2022. The main categories of these requests are:
  - (a) Food - 116
  - (b) Licensing - 81
  - (c) Noise -149
  - (d) Planning Enquiries - 91
  - (e) Refuse - 82
  - (f) Pest - 199
  - (g) Personal Searches - 326
14. Officers have recently taken legal action against a sandwich shop in relation to food hygiene offences. The business was visited as part of a routine inspection programme and was prosecuted due to the conditions found and the aggregating fact that the owner has a poor history of compliance.

**Business owner: Mr Jeffrey Savage**

**Business: Salt and Pepper**

**Address: 32 Larchfield Street, DL3 7DH**

15. The defendant pleaded guilty to the following charges and was fined £120 per offence, i.e. a total of £360. He was also ordered to pay a £36 victim surcharge and £475 towards DBC's costs.
  - (a) The premises was not kept clean as required by Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Annex II Chapter I Para 1, contrary to Regulation 19 of the Food Safety & Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.
  - (b) Equipment in the premises was not kept clean as required by Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 Annex II Chapter V Para1(a) contrary to Regulation 19 of the Food Safety &

## Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.

- (c) The defendant failed to implement a food safety system based on the principles of hazard analysis as required by Regulation (EC) 852/2004, Article 5 paragraph 1, contrary to Regulation 19 of the Food Safety Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.
16. Officers in Environmental Health recently were involved in a drinking water safety incident. Filter backwash water had entered the end water supply at the Broken Scar Treatment Works operated by Northumbrian Water in Darlington due a presumptive failure of a backwash water pump and non-return valve at around 20:30 on the evening of 31/01/22 and continued for a period of around 25 minutes.
  17. This led to a volume of around 2 million litres of potentially contaminated water (within a volume of around 17 million litres) entering the final water outlet well.
  18. Analysis showed 31,000 Darlington properties were affected by this incident. Environmental Health and UKHPA (Public Health) were informed immediately, and an Incident Management Team was formed. A Boil Water Notice (BWN) was issued (belatedly by NWL) and meetings were held over three days to ensure enough samples were taken to be satisfied that the BWN could be lifted. Results indicated that no contamination occurred as a result of the incident and that BWN was issued as a precaution. Officers helped to identify vulnerable businesses and advised commercial premises on compliance with the BWN.

## **Business Investment**

19. Since the beginning of the year, the Council has been administering further covid-related grant support schemes for local businesses. Almost £1m grant funding has been distributed to businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors, as well as other businesses impacted by the Omicron variant. In addition to specific omicron support grants, the Council have also provided a range of enterprise and investment grants and support to those business impacted by extended restrictions in 2021. The total value of Covid-19 financial support grants awarded to Darlington businesses between the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and January 2022 is £45,077,565.
20. In February, the Government launched a competition to determine a new HQ location for the Great British Railway, a new public body to integrate the railways and deliver passenger-focused travel with simpler, modern fares and reliable services. Darlington has submitted a proposal based not only on the town's railway heritage, but coupled with the inventiveness and innovative characteristics, as well as the high levels of connectivity – both physical and virtual. The winning bid will be selected in Summer 2022.
21. The number of business enquiries received continues to rise, as business confidence returns following the lifting of all covid restrictions. The main areas of interest are land availability and town centre retail/leisure space.

## **Darlington Towns Fund**

22. A business case has been completed for each of the nine Towns Fund intervention projects and business case summaries were submitted to Government following agreement by the

Towns Board. Three of the summary documents were submitted in July 2021, agreed and initial funding released. The remaining six were submitted at the end of November 2021. Agreement to these has been received from government and approval given for release of 2021/22 funding.

23. The Northern Echo building has now been acquired by DBC and the Adult Skills project is progressing into design, led by our appointed architect. The T Levels project at Darlington College is progressing into procurement of the main contractor.

#### **Town Centre Developments**

24. Preparatory works continues for Phase 2 for the redevelopment of the Indoor Market. Plans for the development of new toilets, entrance area, new coffee shop and vaults bar have been finalised and tendering has commenced. It is anticipated that work should commence in May 2022.
25. Skinnergate residential development is progressing. The development team has now been finalised with some outstanding detailed work for the listed building being the remaining piece of work to be completed. Once this heritage pre condition has been satisfactorily completed work to demolish the existing buildings will commence in June 2022.

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