

COUNCIL
31 MARCH 2022

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.

Highway Maintenance Programme

2. Cabinet have approved a capital investment of £2.175million in addition to the revenue funding allocated through the MTFP in 2022/23 to improve the condition of our highway network. Where possible, recycling methods will be used. These methods have prevented 4000 tonnes of road material from Darlington going to landfill in the last three years.
3. Highway maintenance schemes are ongoing with footway works at Clifton Road and resurfacing at A167 Croft Road and A68 Rotary Way, with a further resurfacing scheme due to start at Lingfield Way. This is in addition to footway schemes recently completed at Greenhill Road, Heighington and The Wayside, Hurworth.

Highway Improvement Schemes

Woodland Road LCWIP

4. Work on the first phase of the walking and cycling route linking West Park to the town centre via Cockerton continues on Woodland Road. The scheme will provide a segregated cycle lane on each side of the road between the junctions with Hollyhurst Road and Outram Street. Consultation has been carried out on the second phase which will continue the route from Hollyhurst Road junction to the roundabout at Woodland Road/B6279 (Staindrop Road).
5. A Public Inquiry is being held to consider objections to the proposed changes to Duke Street. The outcome of the inquiry will determine the final scheme.

A68 Transport Improvement

6. The A68 is one of the busiest roads in Darlington and the corridor from the motorway to the town centre is recognised as one that has numerous transport issues. A series of proposals look to tackle congestion, make public transport more reliable and make it safer and more attractive to cycle and walk.
7. The proposals developed include new larger roundabouts to replace existing mini roundabouts, whilst improving pedestrian and cycling provision. The scheme does require some land and one Council property, which we are fully aware of the sensitivities around, and we are working with the resident and those other residents directly impacted.

8. The scheme does have significant benefits and would reduce journey times along the corridor in the peak hours by approx. five minutes. It is designed to accommodate the additional traffic from proposed housing developments to the north and west improving the infrastructure for the town as we seek to secure more economic growth for the Borough.
9. A public consultation which included events at Cockerton Club has now closed. Officers are analysing all of the points raised and examining options. Ward councillors and residents will be kept updated on the next stages in the considerations of these schemes.
10. Cabinet have approved a programme of transport and road safety projects for 2022/23. This includes £227m over the next five years from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement which will deliver projects across the Tees Valley to improve our sustainable transport network.
11. The transport programme comprises schemes to address road safety, network and speed management, parking and sustainable travel. This includes the introduction of 25 electric vehicle charging points in our car parks over the coming year. In addition, 20mph schemes for the Hurworth and Mount Pleasant Primary Schools will be constructed and design of 20mph schemes for the Primary Schools of Reid Street, St. Bede's Catholic and St. Augustine's Catholic and the Federation of Abbey Schools will take place.

Head of Steam

12. In February I am pleased to say both Cabinet and Council approved funding for Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter, a £35m scheme. The development will transform the DRHQ into a major visitor attraction by 2024 so that it can be a central part of the bicentenary events of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) in 2025. Essential improvements will be undertaken to a number of significantly historic buildings on the site, linking them together to create a cluster of attractions including the Skerne Bridge, the oldest working railway bridge in the world. Digital and technological investment will bring history to life and there will be a new immersive ride experience only seen at theme parks. The DRHQ will have a café and shop, themed play area, show field, a new live engineering building, temporary exhibition space, archive and extended car parking, all of which attract all generations to visit for years to come.

Libraries

13. To allow building works to progress, library services at Darlington's Crown Street Library have relocated to the East Street side of the building where we are offering a limited service comprising of Select and Collect, Limited Browsing, Limited Public PC's, and Limited Study Space. The Centre for Local Studies remains open with a small amount of reference stock available, and the Art Gallery is open for Junior events and activities to take place. Customers can access the building from the East Street original entrance or through the lift entrance on Priestgate. The popular Home Delivery Service is still running and the branch at Cockerton remains open.

Hippodrome

14. The Hippodrome has taken part in the National Lottery's 'Love Your Local Theatre' campaign. The Lottery subsidised over 150,000 tickets at theatres across the UK as a thank you for the £30million players raise each week for good causes. The Hippodrome was allocated £16,000 and when customers bought a ticket for a performance in March, they received another free ticket courtesy of the National Lottery.

Creative Darlington

15. Creative Darlington supported Laura Degnan and Chris Bradburn's film-making work with both the Grass Roots and Community Arts Project in Darlington in February 2022. Middlesbrough-based Chris recently set up a freelance video editing business and is keen to use his business to champion neurodiversity and both Darlington groups will receive copies of their films to celebrate their work.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

16. Darlington's first Light event took place between 1-6 February 2022, working with local businesses, artists and Darlington College to install eight pieces, which were very well received by visitors and encouraged movement around the town centre.
17. The Events Team have been programming a full schedule of events throughout 2022 and this programme will be launched via the One Darlington Magazine.

Environmental Services

18. Renewal emails and letters have been sent to the 9,200 subscribers to the Garden Waste scheme inviting them to renew for 2022. We are also hoping for further new subscribers to the service. All the garden waste collected is composted and reused on farmland.

Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio