

**COUNCIL**  
**14 JULY 2022**

---

**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO**

---

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 93 planning enforcement cases under investigation and 97 cases have been satisfactorily resolved by the Monitoring and Compliance Officer since the beginning of September.
3. Since the beginning of August 2020, 1,310 applications have been received of which 51 are categorised as major. 1,001 decisions have been made in this period, including Committee Decisions, Chairs Delegated and Delegated Decisions.
4. 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. Satisfactory conclusions have been arrived at, relating to both buildings which will involve significant external appearance changes to the betterment of the Town Centre.
5. Natural England (NE) together with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUCH) announced on 16 March 2022 that the entire administrative area of Darlington Borough Council is now located within the catchment area of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area (SPA).
6. This continues to have an immediate impact on all planning applications which relate to all types of overnight accommodation, such as new dwellings, care homes, student accommodation, holiday accommodation, etc and impacts all developments for one dwelling upwards. It also affects other applications where development may impact upon water quality, including those seeking to discharge planning conditions relating to foul and surface water drainage for a range of development proposals.
7. Since the last overview report, progress has been made with colleagues across the Tees Valley to deal with this issue on a catchment area basis. Our Local MPs have also been briefed and are raising the issue at Westminster. The interim position that has been reached will allow housing development to progress where planning permission has already been granted and the only issues to be agreed relate to details and the discharge of conditions. This will mean that a limited progression of the supply of housing permissions can resume. It has also been established that commercial development not involving overnight stays can progress as normal.

## **Environmental Health**

8. Following a referral from the Food Standards Agency which indicated that small retailers had not affected a Food Product Recall properly, letters were sent to 46 businesses mainly general dealers requesting they check their stock of Kinder products and to request they remove from sale the affected products due to an outbreak of Salmonella typhimurium.
9. A leaflet from the Food Standards Agency was also enclosed to update and inform businesses of the products and dates affected by the product recall. Visits to these businesses will be carried out when in the area and as part of programmed inspection to check stock has been removed.
10. The Environment Act 2021 has extended enforcement powers so that Local Authorities from the 1 May 2022 can issue financial penalties to those emitting substantial amounts of smoke from their chimney in a smoke control area. The financial penalties range from a minimum of £175 to a maximum of £300.
11. A leaflet aimed at giving advice and information to avoid the idling of engines and improve air quality was distributed in April to approx. 150 Hackney Drivers at the same time as the meter tariff calibration took place.

## **Climate Change**

12. Our emissions report for 2021/22 shows that our emissions were 4,864 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>, a drop from the previous year of 150 tonnes.
13. Milestones are in place for the actions in the action plan and Quarter 1 reports are being returned.
14. The feasibility study into two potential district heating network sites for Darlington has been completed. On analysis we have decided that, at this time, the risks to the Council are too great to proceed.
15. The BEIS (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) pilot study, testing the government's proposed approach for designating heat network zones is continuing. Once complete, the government will decide how it is going to put these zones into practice.

## **Darlington Towns Fund**

16. Further assurance returns to government have been submitted in May 2022 from the Town Fund Chair and also the Council Section 151 Officer. Acceptance of these and satisfactory performance review (a return submitted in June) will ensure release of further Towns Funding in line with our agreed financial profile.
17. 2022/23 funding of the first three projects (Adult Skills; T Levels; Skinnergate and the Yards) was released to Darlington Council on the 25 April 2022 following satisfactory submission and review of previously submitted Towns Fund Governance and Performance.

18. The acquired Northern Echo building continues to progress to early stage design and commissioning of required surveys. The T Levels project at Darlington College has entered into contract for the construction, with works expected to commence in June 2022. Skinnergate and the Yards project is progressing with the highway design and the design and delivery of shopfront/property improvements within the area. Developments within the Northgate area include the progression of initial design concepts for the Garden Street and Weir Street area.

### **Business Investment**

19. Business enquiries continues to increase, as business confidence returns following the lifting of covid restrictions. The main areas of interest are industrial land availability and town centre retail/leisure space.
20. The Business Investment team continue to re-connect with a wide range of local businesses and stakeholders. The main feedback from these visits highlights current opportunities for growth, as well as business concerns around recruitment and labour supply and changing import and export regulations.
21. Plans are now underway for the Darlington Business Summit 2022, a high-profile event to be held 5 to 7 October. The Summit will take the best and popular elements of the traditional Business Week, and deliver them in a shorter timescale, and will include:
  - (a) DL Expo – a business showcase event, delivered in partnership with Darlington Business Club.
  - (b) Darlington Jobs Fair, with up to 30 employers offering job opportunities.
  - (c) Darlington Business Summit – exhibitors and workshops offering business support services

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