

COUNCIL
14 JULY 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.

Climate Change

2. To date, 9,850 trees have been planted in 2022 across the Borough as part of a collaborative effort involving DBC officers, members, local residents, volunteers and wildlife groups. A decision is awaited on a funding bid submitted to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, which, if successful, will enable further planting to take place.

Highway Maintenance Programme

3. Highway Maintenance schemes ongoing:
 - (a) C40 Newbiggin Lane: Carriageway Recycling (2.250km)
4. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) B6280 Coniscliffe Road: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.290km)
 - (b) C55 Newton Lane: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.410km)
 - (c) C38a Neasham Road: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.380 km)
 - (d) A68 Swan House Roundabout: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.600 km)
5. Highway Maintenance Schemes completed:
 - (a) A167 Croft Road (Tees View): Carriageway Reconstruction (0.448km)
 - (b) A68 Rotary Way: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.673km)
 - (c) Unc. Lingfield Way: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.225km)
 - (d) Unc Huntley Street: Carriageway Resurfacing (0.05km)
 - (e) Unc. Hammond Drive: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.144km)

Highway Improvement Schemes

Woodland Road LCWIP

6. Work on the first phase of the Woodland Road LCWIP will be completed over the summer months. We are currently designing the second phase from Hollyhurst Road to Woodland Road B6279 (Staindrop Road) roundabout.
7. We have now received the findings of the Public Inquiry that was held on 30 March to consider objections to the proposed changes to Duke Street. The Inspector's recommendation was to proceed with the changes. A report will be brought to July Cabinet in order to formally consider the objections.

A68 Transport Improvement

8. Our consultation on plans for the A68 generated significant interest with 222 individuals providing responses either online or in person at our consultation events. 97 Comments were received suggesting alternatives or amendments to the scheme, and we have been assessing the viability of these suggestions. There are a number of suggestions we would like to take forward and we are currently undertaking further modelling work to assess the impact of these changes. Once this work is complete the consultation report and final scheme layout will be shared.

Head of Steam

9. A new exhibition, 'Locos & Lemon Tops', opened at the museum on Saturday 25 June. The museum worked with the Move More Team to engage with residents of sheltered accommodation to include their memories of visits to the coast.

Rail Heritage Quarter (RHQ)

10. Work started in May on the RHQ with the site set up and road changes prior to work starting on the new rail shed which A1 trust will occupy. Work is progressing well and programmed to be complete by spring 2023. The stage 2 application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund is being finalised prior to submission on 11 August 2022 with the outcome likely to be known in December this year.

Libraries

Library Events

11. Libraries hosted a number of events as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Darlington, including gifting copies of the 'Queens Handbag' to school pupils and supporting the town centre events programme. Cockerton Library held a Jubilee Reminiscence Party with live music and refreshments, which launched a new monthly group aimed at older adults to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation and improve wellbeing.

Library Digital Inclusion

12. To reduce digital exclusion in Darlington, libraries have been loaning iPads as part of the 'Let's Do Digital Scheme', a partnership with the equality and diversity team. At the end of May, 15 people had borrowed a device, many of which had been renewed totalling 31 weeks of loan periods, and three people had claimed a refurbished device to keep.

Library Investment

13. The capital works on the library are progressing well. Externally work has started on the roof on a section-by-section basis with tiles being stripped, repairs carried out before the tiles are replaced, internally the replacement of the mechanical and electrical installations continues to progress. The library has been fully closed since 4 July, and will re-open on 18 July, to allow elements of the work to take place safely without public in the building.

Hippodrome

14. The Rt Hon Simon Clarke MP visited Darlington Hippodrome on Thursday 19 May to mark the first full year of the theatre being open again since the pandemic and to highlight the essential role that the Cultural Recovery Fund has played in the theatre's recovery. Simon was welcomed by theatre staff, A.C.E representatives, councillors and cultural leaders, Theatre Hullabaloo and Darlington Culture Volunteers. Local and regional press and media attended, with the visit featured on ITV Tyne Tees.

Creative Darlington

15. Creative Darlington supported the installation of exhibition boards in the Friends Community Hub space on Skinnergate. The boards were used to share the work of four artists during Darlington Arts Festival 2022.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

16. The events programme for this summer launched with a three-day Platinum Jubilee Celebration in the town centre that was enjoyed by thousands of visitors.

The event featured a big digital screen, live bands and lots of activities for all ages and was very well received. The events programme for Summer 2022 is packed with exciting events to welcome people into the town centre; a visitor survey will be launched to gather data and information for future planning.

17. The town centre partnership team held an evening networking seminar for town centre businesses in June and following the High Streets Task Force report, expert sessions will be held to look at ideas and suggestions to help improve the High Street in Darlington.

Environmental Services

18. In relation to garden waste collections, 9,137 subscriptions were received last summer. To date in 2022 this number has already been exceeded and currently stands at 9,300 subscriptions.
19. During the winter maintenance season, the network was treated 153 times with 4,832 tonnes of salt used.

Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio