

COUNCIL
29 SEPTEMBER 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.

Darlington Transport Plan and Associated Documents

2. The consultation on the Darlington Transport Plan and associated Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan and the Parking Strategy commenced in August and closed on 2 September. Consultation responses will be considered, and any appropriate changes will be made to the plan prior to consideration by Cabinet in November.

Highway Improvement Schemes

Woodland Road (Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan - LCWIP)

3. The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) with the Local Authorities have developed the Tees Valley Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) which identifies priority corridors for investment in measures to encourage increased levels of cycling and walking.
4. The West Park/Faverdale to Darlington Town Centre Route is the first route being developed using the new national guidelines for cycle infrastructure design. New features have been introduced as part of this scheme and these new standards are required to be considered on all new schemes moving forward.
5. The work on Woodland Road Phase 1 is now complete. The delivery of this phase which is on Darlington's busiest arterial route has been complex and challenging in terms of the management of all modes of transport through the works. The Council will review the construction delivery to see if there are any improvements that can be adopted for subsequent phases of delivery.
6. The next phase of delivery will be the Duke Street section of the scheme that has been subject to public inquiry and separate Cabinet reports. This will commence Autumn 2022.
7. Consultation on proposed improvements to the A68 corridor has concluded and a consultation report has been produced. Engagement with the consultation was good, resulting in a number of changes being made to the proposals. Next steps include securing funding and planning permission for the proposals whilst continuing to engage with residents and businesses.

Highway Maintenance Programme

8. Over 50 schemes and locations are included in this highway maintenance programme updated, which will seek to improve over 14km of the road network. The progress on this programme is as follows:
9. Highway Maintenance schemes ongoing:
 - (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 (0.600km)
 - (e) C55 Prior Street: Footway Refurbishment (0.466km)
 - (f) Unc. Carriageway Micro Asphalt Contract (46 locations, 9.051km)
10. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) Unc. Swaledale Avenue: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.252km)
 - (b) Unc. Faverdale: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.474km)
 - (c) Unc. Pierremont Crescent West Back Lane: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.117km)
11. Highway Maintenance Schemes completed:
 - (a) C40 Newbiggin Lane: Carriageway Recycling (2.250km)

West Cemetery Drainage

12. Cabinet have approved the release of £250K capital to carry out additional design and drainage works within West Cemetery to minimise the risk of flooding from the site to residential properties.
13. As part of the Crematorium and Cemetery works, underground storage tanks have been installed to manage the flow of surface water from the new development and land drains have also been installed along the boundary of properties on Salutation Road to address concerns regarding drainage of the site.

Climate Change

14. Newbiggin Lane is a recycling scheme using approximately 2000ton of planings taken from the previous year's maintenance programme which would normally have gone to landfill. This scheme along with six others are also being surfaced using a warm mix asphalt material which typically saves 10% in carbon emissions during manufacture which reduces harmful emissions at source.
15. Northumbria in Bloom judges visited Darlington on 20 July and enjoyed seeing the town in full bloom. Water butts are being installed to encourage rainwater usage for planters and perennial plants are being grown to create year-round colour and interest. The use of bark chippings is to help retain moisture in the planters and discourage weed growth.

Head of Steam

16. The museum had a very busy summer, with a wide range of activities and events enjoyed by families; including, a very successful 'Meet and Greet Paddington' event held on 17 July and attended by more than 2,000 visitors.
17. As we have just celebrated the 197th anniversary of the S+DR work is progressing well on the rail heritage quarter and Cabinet have just released the funding to restore the Replica of Locomotion No.1. Work has now commenced on the restoration which will be complete in Autumn 2024.

Libraries

18. During the ongoing works, Darlington Libraries offered a Summer Reading Challenge to all children aged 0 – 16 in a bid to prevent the reading dip children often experience after time away from education. Incentives included a Meta Quest 2 Virtual Reality Headset, a Nintendo Switch, a Kindle Fire, Lego and toys. To compliment the reading challenge, a large programme of events was arranged at both libraries, including illustration workshops and animal encounters.

Hippodrome

19. Darlington Hippodrome hosted the Conservative Hustings on 9 August as the regional venue for the North East. The talk show style event was featured on the main stage bringing with it the attention of national and regional media, and a full house of Conservative members from across the North East.

Creative Darlington

20. Two programmes supported through the Creative Darlington budget and Arts Council England project funding have been showcased at Darlington Hippodrome. TeesDance's 'Move UP' programme worked with eleven young people aged 12 – 19 showcasing their creations on Darlington Hippodrome's main stage on 5 June 2022.
21. 'Opening The Closet Doors' was screened at Darlington Hippodrome on 11 August 2022 as part of Darlington's Pride programme, with 100 attendees. The film was created by Sarah Li, alongside local LGBTQ+ people, following research exploring Darlington Hippodrome's archives.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

22. During the summer season, a large stage was installed in the Market Square to support the events programme by providing an opportunity to host smaller music events and activities with the aim of attracting people into Darlington and encouraging longer dwell times. The stage was sponsored by Northumbrian Water and was set-up with astroturf, picket fencing and deckchairs to offer visitors a park-like space in the town centre.

23. The town centre partnership team continues to engage with the businesses offering support and continued press coverage in publications like Darlington Today, Living magazine and online via social media. The team continue to develop new links, including sharing training opportunities with local businesses.

Environmental Services

24. Unfortunately, there have been some staff shortages in the street cleansing service due to sickness and this has resulted in a pressure on the service area. This resulted in an issue with litter and dog bins not being serviced as regularly as they should have been. Steps were taken to improve the situation and measures are being taken to mitigate the situation in the future if similar pressures are experienced. However, we appreciate the inconvenience this has caused for those responsible people wanting to dispose of rubbish considerately.

Councillor Andy Keir
Local Services Portfolio