

**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
3 NOVEMBER 2022**

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**DARLINGTON BUSINESS SUMMIT 2022**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present a summary of the activities of Darlington Business Summit 2022

**Summary**

2. Darlington Business Summit 2022 was an exciting three-day event for businesses and residents to find out what business opportunities are available in Darlington. Its aim is to showcase the information, support and opportunities for businesses and promote job opportunities for local resident looking for new employment or a change of career. All events were free of charge and took place in the Dolphin Centre.

**Recommendation**

3. Please note there are no recommendations for this report, this report is just for information.

**Ian Williams,  
Chief Executive**

**Background Papers**

None

Andrew Perkin : Extension 6308

S17 Crime and Disorder	No impact from the report
Health and Wellbeing	No impact from the report
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No impact from the report
Diversity	No impact from the report
Wards Affected	No impact from the report
Groups Affected	No impact from the report
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	N/A

Urgent Decision	N/A
Council Plan	Darlington Business Summit directly supports the Council Plan by supporting the growth of local businesses, the local economy and supporting residents finding employment.
Efficiency	No impact from the report
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	No impact from the report

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

4. Hundreds of businesses and local job seekers took advantage of the first ever Darlington Business Summit held at the Dolphin Centre from Wednesday 5 until Friday 7 October.
5. Organised by Darlington Borough Council, and in conjunction with Darlington Business Club, the three-day event gave local business people, and those who are thinking of starting a business, the chance to network with others and to find out more about the help and support available across the borough and the wider Tees Valley.
6. The schedule of events at the Summit was:
  - (a) 5 October 2022 – DL Expo
  - (b) 6 October 2022 – Darlington Jobs Fair
  - (c) 7 October 2022 – Darlington Business Support Showcase
  - (d) 7 October 2022 – Darlington Economic Update
7. Darlington Business Summit kicked off with DL Expo 2022, Darlington Business Club's flagship networking event, providing an opportunity to celebrate the diverse business base in Darlington. The event offered a showcase for businesses, large and small, and presented an opportunity for local businesses to connect with the local community. DL Expo 2022 provided a platform for exhibitors and delegates to network, promote their businesses and make those all-important new connections. Hosted by Darlington Business Club, DL Expo featured a wide-range of businesses exhibiting their products and services whilst attendees were able to access a wealth of information on local businesses.
8. Work opportunities and training became the focus of the middle day of the event as Darlington Jobs Fair took centre stage. More than 800 people browsed a wide range of stalls from around 60 local employers and training providers. The event gave people the chance to chat face to face with employers to find out more about the local opportunities on offer. A live jobs board also gave people the chance to apply for immediate vacancies across more than 100 jobs. Feedback from employers attending the event has been very positive, with many taking job applications on the day for current vacancies. The provision of the Jobs Fair Newspaper and the physical Jobs Boards within the exhibition hall were welcomed by many. Post event evaluation has identified that some applicants have progressed to job interview stage. Feedback received includes:
  - (a) "We thought the event was absolutely fantastic, since 6th October we have had 130 applicants for the roles, we have available which I think is a fantastic reflection of the day! We have also seen an influx of visitors to our careers page which is exactly what we want!"
  - (b) "We gave out 24 job application packs during the event, which we received back the same day 8 applications. Out of the 8, we are looking at 2 of those for a site visit to show them the type of work we do and hopefully may lead to a career opportunity for them."
  - (c) "This is by far the most successful and well organised jobs fair we have attended. There was a wide range of job seekers attending across a range of ages/backgrounds

- which was brilliant. We had a lot of interest in both our staff and officer roles. The Dolphin Centre was an excellent venue with refreshments available, good-sized sports hall for a large number of companies to attend and advertise within. The event has clearly been well advertised to the public to get such good attendance rates. Thank you for inviting us to attend, we would like to attend similar events to this in future.”
- (d) “Great from start to finish, much more successful than other fairs we have attended. Very busy, lots of opportunities for discussion, promotion and networking.”
9. Darlington Business Support Showcase was a specialist event showcasing the wide range of business support services available to local businesses. Over 30 business support agencies exhibited, offering support to a wide range of business sectors and covered a wide range of business issues, challenges, and opportunities, such as:
- (a) Develop a business idea to start your own business
  - (b) Looking at ways to develop products and services to grow the customer base
  - (c) Reducing overheads by improving energy efficiency
  - (d) Growing business markets overseas
  - (e) Supporting businesses to access public sector procurement
10. In addition to the support available from the exhibitors, there were also three bespoke seminars to provide details advice and guidance on three specific topics:
- (a) Social Media Content Creation for Small Businesses - Tips, Tricks and Hacks
  - (b) Finding Funding & Writing the Bid
  - (c) How to overcome recruitment struggles and develop your workforce
11. Despite an extensive promotional campaign using both digital and print media, alongside individual invites, the number of businesses attending on the day was 52. Whilst this was disappointing, those that did attend found the support available to be both positive and useful. Speaking with local authority colleagues at Hartlepool & Sunderland, they have experienced similarly low levels of business participation at their Business Support exhibitions in recent weeks. This is probably due in part to the large number of similar business support focussed events across the Tees Valley in the last few months i.e. Teesside Expo, Tees Valley Showcase, Tees Valley Business Summit, and Grow Tees Valley.
12. The final event of Darlington Business Summit 2022 provided the annual “Darlington Economic Update” to an audience of business leaders and business stakeholders. In addition, a special presentation was made by Darlington Economic Campus, detailing the opportunities presented by the location of more than 1100 Civil servants in the town.
13. Following the Business Summit, the Business Investment Team have received a number of enquiries from local businesses seeking advice on guidance on a range of issues including recruitment, energy efficiency and digital marketing.

### **Outcomes of Consultation**

14. Following the Business Summit, the Business Investment Team have received a number of enquiries from local businesses seeking advice on guidance on a range of issues including recruitment, energy efficiency and digital marketing.