

COUNCIL
24 NOVEMBER 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. Highway Maintenance schemes ongoing:
 - (a) Unc. Faverdale: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.474km)
 - (b) C55 Prior Street: Footway Refurbishment (0.466km)
 - (c) Unc. Carriageway Micro Asphalt Contract (46 locations, 9.051km)
 - (d) B6279 Tornado Way (Lingfield Point Junction): Carriageway Resurfacing (0.223km)
 - (e) Unc. Swaledale Avenue: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.252km)
3. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
 - (a) Unc. Pierremont Crescent West Back Lane: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.117km)
4. Highway Maintenance Schemes completed:
 - (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)

Highway Improvement Schemes

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

5. The next phase of the LCWIP is underway with works on Outram Street under construction. The next phase of delivery will be the Duke Street section. This will now commence after the Christmas period and work is underway on a communications plan and phasing plan to ensure businesses are kept updated.
6. Government have agreed the provisional programme of investment across the Tees Valley for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme with TVCA. This will include rail, walking and cycling schemes and bus corridor improvements. The programme will now be developed with feasibility work underway that will be brought forward for consultation and briefings as it is developed.

Climate Change

7. The Council will be relacing up to 70 small diesel vans with equivalent electric models over the next two to three years. This change in fuel source will save approximately 180 tonnes of carbon a year.

8. Installation of the 22kW and 50kW electric vehicle chargers that comprise the first phase of the Tees Valley network is ongoing with the first sites ready for public use, with the remainder to follow in December. A 100% renewable energy contract has been procured to supply the network. The first sites to be completed in Darlington are Commercial Street West, Winston Street North and Park Place East and West. Work is also taking place in Kendrew Street, Abbots Yard and Feethams MSCP.

Head of Steam

9. 'Designs of the Future', is an online exhibition which launched in October. This project saw young people design the future museum site in Minecraft. The project was funded by Tees Valley Museums NPO and facilitated by a digital museums specialist. 'Future Curators', a pilot scheme for young people aged 13-16 years is also underway at the museum. The scheme aims to introduce young people to the museum sector and provide the opportunity to gain new skills and opportunities to work on museum projects.
10. Children from Darlington schools came together on 7 October 2022 to discuss plans for the upcoming Rail Heritage Quarter adventure playground with the designers, Capco. With input from local children and childminders, the personalised feel, equipment, and accessibility of the project, will be at the forefront of the design.

Libraries

11. Whilst the Library building is temporarily inaccessible to the public to allow the refurbishment work to progress, an alternative town centre location for customers to borrow and return books is available at the Dolphin Centre. Customers can now visit at various times during the week to 'Select and Collect' books, join the library, and learn about our services.
12. In addition to the Temporary facility, Cockerton Branch Library is also open for adults and children to browse the bookshelves, and access computers and study space. Outside of regular opening hours, the popular Bookstart Rhymetime sessions will be available to book, and there will be regular Centre for Local Studies 'takeover' afternoons where customers can access the collection and speak to the experienced team. Cockerton Library also holds weekly arts and crafts sessions for children after school, and a monthly Rock of Ages music appreciation group for older adults. A new watercolour group will also commence shortly, where novice art enthusiasts can meet.
13. Residents aged 60 years onwards continue to be offered the free Home Delivery Service, where the experienced team choose a selection of books based on individual interests. This service is delivered monthly with assistance from Darlington Support, to provide a friendly doorstep chat.
14. The online library is always open, alongside the Borrowbox and Libby Apps, which have a wide range of eBooks and audiobooks available to choose from and can be download free onto a device. The Darlington Libraries App allows customers to search the whole of the catalogue and select and order books to be collected from either their branch library or the temporary 'Select and Collect' pick up point at the Dolphin Centre.

Hippodrome

15. The Hippodrome launches two new exhibitions this autumn. 'Identity' showcases a collaboration between Veronika Koval, a Ukrainian artist living in Darlington, the Morrison Trust and Ukrainian families who have been working with Darlington Assistance for Refugees. The exhibition incorporates a variety of photographic artworks, murals and mixed media, all conveying powerful messages to raise awareness of the perceived loss of personhood and sense of identity. In November, following on from 'Opening the Closet Doors' art and film project, the 'Principal Boys and Pantomime' exhibition opens in the Catherine Cookson Heritage Gallery.

Creative Darlington

16. Creative Darlington has worked with Middlesbrough Art Weekender to promote activity in Darlington in advance of the festival, with approximately 280 people in total attending three, family friendly, Pop-Up Print drop-in sessions at The Friends Community Hub; all sessions were free of charge.
17. A further free family friendly activity was offered at The Friends Community Hub by Cabinet of Curiosity Studio on Saturday 22 October and Saturday 29 October 2022 as part of an international event, The Big Draw festival.

Town Centre Partnership and Events

18. The Town Centre team hosted a seminar with Darlington's allocated High Street Task Force Experts and a free placemaking workshop on 4 October 2022. This will develop into a report from the expert, Steve Millington, to highlight ideas around how to activate spaces and encourage more business and footfall on the high street. A variety of stakeholders attended this event, with feedback anticipated shortly.
19. A packed calendar of events has been programmed for the winter season, starting with Halloween and including the popular Ice Sculpture Trails, Christmas Lights Switch On and the return of an ice rink for Christmas.
20. 18,503 Darlington residents celebrated the return of Darlington's Firework Spectacular on Saturday 5 November 2022. The event was a resounding success with exceptional feedback on social media platforms. Visitors were treated to street theatre performances, fire-eaters, fairground rides with lots of food and drink and a sensory specific light, music and firework show prior to the main fireworks display. The event was free to admit but ticketed via a wristband collection system. A high proportion of visitors followed our request to walk to the event and had their bands ready on arrival to enter the site. Traffic throughout the town flowed well and the resident permit system worked effectively.

Environmental Services

21. South Park and Darlington Town Centre both won the prestigious 'Gold' award at the recent Northumbria in Bloom competition in September 2022. This award recognises the hard work undertaken primarily by the Horticulture and Street Cleansing teams.