

COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2023

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OVERVIEW

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and update Members on the Leader's Portfolio since the last meeting of Council. The following are some of the areas of work under the Leader's Portfolio.

Strategic Transport

Tees Flex

2. The demand responsive bus service was first launched with Stagecoach back in 2020 as a three-year pilot. However, just a month after the launch the UK was hit by the Covid pandemic and was placed into a nationwide lockdown. The service was set up with the purpose of connecting people in rural areas to economic centres to enable them to access jobs and services. The pilot will now be extended for eighteen months under the exact same conditions with the operational zones and prices unchanged.

Bus Funding and £2 Maximum Fare Offer

3. The government has announced that it is extending bus recovery funding and the £2 maximum fare offer through to the end of June 2023. TVCA and the local authorities continue to work with bus operators to ensure a sustainable future bus network across the Tees Valley.

Active Travel Fund Tranche 4

4. TVCA has worked alongside all local authorities to bid into tranche 4 of the Active Travel Fund. The Darlington element of the bid relates to linking the Parkgate/Yarm Road City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) active travel project to the redevelopment of Darlington Station.

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Funding

5. The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund supports authorities in England to plan and deliver ChargePoint infrastructure for residents without off-street parking. The fund comprises of:
 - (a) capability funding to ensure that authorities have the staff and capability to plan and deliver ChargePoint infrastructure
 - (b) capital funding to support ChargePoint delivery
6. TVCA can now apply for LEVI capability funding and is working with local authorities on a bid. The government will provide more details on the capital funding scheme shortly.

Darlington Station

7. The temporary car park on the cattle market site is progressing well and once completed will allow parking to transfer to this site and works to commence in earnest on the new station in May 2023. Demolitions are also progressing to facilitate the development of the Victoria Road entrance improvements. We will continue to support TVCA, who are the lead on the project with support from Network Rail and LNER, to deliver this major project that is a key building block in TVCA's rail strategy.

Climate Change

8. The Cross-Party Working Group met on 19 December and were pleased to welcome Cllr Willis to the group. The meeting was attended by the Assistant Director of Community Services, who updated the group on the current process for waste management in Darlington.

Darlington Economic Campus (DEC)

9. Work with the Government Property Agency (GPA) and DEC continues with just over 600 positions now in post. At the recent Jobs Fair, the DEC workshop was the most popular event. It proved an excellent opportunity for the civil service to promote the various career opportunities for local people within the economic campus.

Towns Fund

10. The Darlington College T-Levels project has now completed on site and handover to the college has taken place.
11. Development work is progressing across the portfolio of Towns Fund projects, onsite in Skinnergate and the Yards and at the Railway Heritage Quarter. Design continues in relation to commenced for the Adult Skills facility, Northgate and Victoria Road.
12. Engagement continues with stakeholders on a one-to-one basis, with further community events to be planned in the future.
13. Facilitated by the Towns Fund, a new Tiny Forest in the Denes is to be planted, with funding secured from the Queens Green Canopy by Earthwatch.



Councillor Jonathan Dulston
Leader of the Council Portfolio