

**COUNCIL**  
**28 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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**OVERVIEW OF LOCAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Local Services Portfolio.

**Climate Change**

2. The feasibility of a town centre Car Club for residents, business and visitors is being explored through our Local Transport Plan (LTP). Car Clubs aim to give users flexible access to a vehicle without the need to own one and offers a sustainable transport option that fits alongside our active and public transport provision. The availability of a town centre Car Club would deliver against a wide range of objectives, including achieving net zero targets through the use of electric vehicles and reducing parking pressures and congestion in the town centre.

**Highway Maintenance Programme**

3. Highway Maintenance Schemes on site:
  - (a) Parapet Upgrades: Safety Kerb/Guardrail installation (seven sites)
  - (b) C38a Neasham Road (Phase 2): Carriageway Reconstruction (0.320km)
  - (c) Unc. Burnside Road (Phase 2): Carriageway Construction (0.440km)
  - (d) Unc. Barnes Road (Phase 2): Carriageway Reconstruction (0.406km)
  - (e) A167 Feethams Avenue: Carriageway Reconstruction (0.174km)
  - (f) Carriageway Micro Asphalt Contract: 31 sites (5.595km)
4. Highway Maintenance schemes due to start:
  - (a) A67 Merrybent (Phase 3): Carriageway Reconstruction (0.426km)
  - (b) C39 Walworth Road, Heighington: Carriageway Recycling (0.668km)
5. Highway Maintenance Schemes completed:
  - (a) Clifton Road West Back Lane: Back Lane reconstruction (0.136km)
  - (b) Avon Road Estate: Footway Refurbishment (0.712km)
  - (c) Patching Prior to Micro-Asphalt Contract (18 sites)
  - (d) Unc. Lanethorpe Road / Burnside Road (Phase 1): Carriageway Reconstruction (0.340km)

## Highway Improvement Schemes

### Woodland Road Phase 1 (Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan - LCWIP)

6. Work commenced on the Duke Street section of this scheme on 26 February 2023 with the work split into seven phases of work to minimise disruption to businesses. The work is progressing to schedule and is due to be complete by November 2023.
7. We continue to work with businesses to both inform them of the progress on the scheme and any works that directly affect access to their property. We will maintain access to businesses throughout the duration of the works.

### Local Transport Plan

8. In March, Cabinet approved the LTP programme of works for 2023/24. This will see over £3.5M of Council investment in our transport network over the coming year. Since the last report the following work has taken place.
  - (a) Officers are reviewing responses to safe routes to school consultation at Hurworth Comprehensive School and St. Augustine's Primary School.
  - (b) Design work is progressing for safe routes to school schemes at Abbey School, Hurworth School and Reid Street Primary School.
  - (c) Officers are reviewing the current town centre cycle parking provision, with a view to making improvements enabling parking to be safer and ensuring that supply is adequate and appropriate for use.

### Bus Services

9. Tees Valley Combined Authority, in its role as the Transport Authority, entered into emergency bus contracts for services 12 (Hurworth/MSG) and services 17/18 (Mowden/Albert Hill/Hundens Lane) following Arriva's service reductions in July. These contracts ended on 2 September.
10. TVCA tendered for replacement longer-term contracts from 3 September to the end of March 2024.
11. The new service 6/6A (formally service 12) will be operated by Stagecoach under contract to TVCA. This service commenced on 6 September and offers several enhancements. It will:
  - (a) Serve Hurworth in both directions Monday – Saturday daytimes with one service per hour operating a clockwise loop Darlington – Grange Road – Croft – Hurworth – Neasham Road – Darlington, with the other service in the hour travelling anti-clockwise around the loop;
  - (b) Offer a new two-hourly Sunday service to Middleton St. George and the Airport;

- (c) Provide new direct links between Darlington and Yarm/Stockton (From 21 September);
  - (d) Provide an hourly Monday-Saturday service to the Airport (two-hourly on Sundays).
12. All services through Middleton-One-Row will continue to operate in one direction whether travelling towards Stockton or Darlington. Officers are currently looking at adding new bus stops to the network in a number of locations, subject their being safe for buses to stop and for passengers to board and alight. Members will be consulted as to the location of any new proposed bus stops. Until formal stops can be located, Stagecoach has indicated that it will operate a hail and ride service along certain sections of the route to maximise access to the service.
13. Both Services 17 and 18 (formerly the 3/3A) continue their operation by Arriva under contract to TVCA until March 2024. The routes and frequencies remain unchanged.
14. Evening and Sunday services recommenced for Services 3 (Skerne Park) and 4 (Minors Crescent) from Sunday 3 September.
15. All contracts will operate to March 2024. It is hoped that additional BSIP+ funding will be available from that date to ensure provision continues. TVCA have had an allocation of £1,529,477 confirmed for 24/25, along with details of the conditions that need to be met through a memorandum of understanding to secure the funding.

### **Town Centre Transport**

16. In July 2023, parking charges were reintroduced in council-operated car parking facilities following the end of funding at 1 July 2023 that was agreed by the previous Council Administration. While it is too early to draw a conclusion about the full impact of parking charges on patterns of use in the town centre, I hope that the following information will be of interest to members:
- (a) The number of pay and display tickets issued has decreased since June 2023, but remained consistent through July and August 2023 and footfall overall in 2023 is lower than in 2022, including when the 2-hour parking offer was in place;
  - (b) The income from parking ticketing in both July and August has exceeded pre-offer years;
  - (c) Current data suggests that the average length of stay in council-operated parking areas has increased;
  - (d) The number of people boarding buses in the town centre is up on average by 13 per cent across Quarter 1 of 2023 versus 2022.
17. We are currently exploring options to upgrade pay and display machines to include card facilities and to implement pay-by-phone in all council-operated locations.

## **Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP)**

18. TVCA have produced a region-wide Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy that will deliver a consistent approach to providing charging infrastructure, including on-street provision. The final draft is expected imminently and will be shared with members. This strategy will enable officers to seek approval of a policy for Darlington that is consistent across the Tees Valley. A number of internal working groups have been set up within the Council in readiness for this and the subsequent infrastructure roll-out required.

## **Head of Steam**

19. The museum took a summer holiday activity programme of circus skills, crafts, science activities, theatre shows, magic workshops, animals and dinosaurs on tour across Darlington, visiting Firthmoor, Red Hall, Skerne Park, Cockerton and Clifton Road Community Centres. The attendance figure for Museum on the Move over the summer holiday period was 2,774.

## **Libraries**

20. Darlington Library has welcomed back customers after an extensive restoration and refurbishment. Following an opening day attended by over 1,000 residents, Crown Street will be hosting a fortnight-long festival of events to engage both existing and new audiences.
21. The transformation has seen phenomenal improvements to the fabric of the building and secured the future of Crown Street as Darlington's central Library for years to come.
22. Internally, with significant funding from Arts Council England, 'The Hive' has been created. This is a bright and vibrant space offering new, innovative digital technology designed to spark visitors' interests in STEAM activities that may lead to hobbies, further education, jobs or business.
23. The new Children's Library is themed around an enchanted woodland and features emotive artwork from Charlie Mackesy's beloved book, 'The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse'.
24. Funding from LibraryOn is supporting a fresh new-look website for Darlington Libraries, including a virtual tour and augmented reality experiences.

## **Creative Darlington**

25. 'The Last Train Home' music and comedy festival, programmed by Tracks Darlington, took place on Saturday 2 September, with stages at Darlington Hippodrome, The Hullabaloo and The Forum Music Centre. The festival secured Arts Council England Project Funding alongside Darlington Borough Council Heritage & Culture fund budget support.
26. During August, Darlington Borough Council secured a £38,502 Project Funding grant offer from Arts Council England to support the 'Your Library Story', Darlington Library creative programme, incorporating a variety of creative activity, events and exhibitions for all ages, with support from the Heritage & Culture fund budget. The programme will run between September 2023 and October 2024.

## **Town Centre Partnership and Events**

27. On Sunday 6 August, a record number of racers joined the Darlington 10K Run with over 1,900 entrants. The top 3 racers all broke the course record with the best time coming in at 28:45 by Mr Martin Mumo Musyoka.
28. Thousands of visitors flocked to the Pride Weekender (12-14 August) with entertainment, activities and information stands receiving excellent feedback. Darlington's long established MonGay Pride celebrations, held on 14 August, also supported evening economy venues and attracted good numbers of people.
29. The summer events programme has been well received and continues to attract families and visitors to Darlington.
30. A new event was held on Wednesday 30 August to attract neurodiverse families, with interactive and sensory activities programmed alongside information teams and charities who were available to offer support and advice.
31. The town centre team are currently working with high street and independent retailers to develop a new 'Festival of the High Street' to attract visitors to the town centre. The aim of the festival is to attract visitors and raise awareness of the varied offering that Darlington provides.

## **Environmental Services**

32. The Garden Waste Subscription Service continues to grow, reaching a milestone of 10,000 subscribers for the first time in July 2023.
33. Following success in Northumbria in Bloom in 2022, we were invited to take part in the National Britain in Bloom (BiB) competition this year. BiB Judging took place on 25 July 2023 with the outcome anticipated in October 2023.

**Councillor Libby McCollom**  
**Local Services Portfolio**