

**LEADER AND EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW**

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**Updates and issues**

1. As previously explained, I am to use each Council report to update Council on important issues for the Borough to ensure Council is sighted on them and able to debate them. For this Council, the issues are highlighted below.
2. **Tees Valley Combined Authority Investment Plan (TVCAIP)** – A great deal of my time in recent weeks and months has been taken up in considering the next update to the TVCAIP. Many of you will have seen proposals about the potential to purchase Durham Tees Valley Airport (DTVA), however the Investment Plan is far more wide ranging than a single issue. The anticipated resources available for the period 2019-2029 are £583.8M and at the time of writing this report, the indicative allocation of the resources is as follows :-

• Transport	252.3
• Education, Employment and Skills	55.0
• Business Growth	146.5
• Culture & Tourism	60
• Research, Development and Innovation	20
• Place Programme	50
3. Such significant an investment pot is available as a result of 5 Tees Valley Councils agreeing to and establishing a Combined Authority which is built on decades of joint working between the Councils on economic growth and related issues. I believe that the forward looking approach the Councils took in establishing the Combined Authority has real potential to make a step change for the Tees Valley economy, it is therefore essential we utilise the resources we have wisely which is why much time and energy has been applied to develop a 10 year investment plan.
4. The TVCA meeting to decide on the Investment Plan took place on 24 January 2018, the day after the despatch of the Council agenda papers so I will be able to update Council on the outcome of the meeting. However, in writing this update to Council, I wanted to let you know my intentions on the Investment Plan as a member of the TVCA Cabinet, the body which is constituted of the 5 Council Leaders and the Mayor and has to take decisions on the Investment Plan with approval subject to a unanimous vote.
5. It is my intention to support the whole Investment Plan which includes the much publicised purchase of the airport. Looking specifically at the Airport, the options are to let it close in 2021 or invest in trying to save and improve the airport. The latter is the correct route given the economic benefit an airport brings to the region. It is this economic benefit that convinces me we need to act, on a commercial basis the airport is loss making and will be for many years. The Investment Plan not only allows for the purchase of the airport but funds to invest and cover losses, the total set aside will be £70M at this stage. It is my firm view we must try and save and

develop the airport but as I have said before, not at any cost therefore we must keep progress on our plans under constant review.

6. The wide plan offers great opportunities to improve the Tees Valley economy and I am positively excited by the significant funding for transport which is key to unlocking access to jobs. The Combined Authority has always identified culture as key enabler to economic growth by increasing tourism and improving the “feel” and “offer” of the region. I do believe this plan will move the region forward significantly.
7. Finally on the plan, it would be remiss of me not to take a look at it from a Darlington perspective within the wider Tees Valley vision. The plan allows for some significant investment in Darlington as well as the generic cross region investment namely :-

Darlington Station Improvements	£25M
Darlington Railway Museum	£20M
Ingenuous Growth Fund to assist economy growth in the Borough likely to be targeted at the town centre	£10M

8. I trust Council will agree with me that to the proposed plan represents great opportunities for Darlington and the Tees Valley.

## Meetings

9. **Darlington Partnership** - I attended the Darlington Partnership Board meeting on 28 November 2018. The Board agreed the final version of the Fairer, Richer Darlington programme which is now published on the Partnership’s website. The meeting focused on action partners would take to deliver the programme. This is a significant initiative which aims to tackle poverty and address inequality in the Borough. A key element of the programme is focused on maximising the spend of public bodies in the Borough. With this in mind work is underway to examine Council spend. Fairer, Richer, Darlington addresses an important and worsening issue in Darlington and I will therefore want to ensure Council services are aligned to it.
10. **Darlington Cares** - I attended a celebration event which marked the success of a project delivered by Darlington Cares, ‘The Great Park Auction’ which saw four of its member companies pledge a total of 2,135 employee volunteering hours to help improve four of the Borough’s best loved green spaces and play areas.
11. Cummins pledged 465 hours to Eastbourne Park, EE donated 750 hours to The Denes, Darlington Building Society offered 500 hours to North Lodge Park and Capita volunteered 420 hours to Green Park. Working with the Council and its parks rangers and the respective parks’ Friends groups, the volunteers worked over the Summer to improve the parks. In all 921 volunteers donated 3,376 hours of their time – way in excess of the hours bid. The benefits of the initiative have been far wider than just the horticultural improvements, with far more local residents now able to enjoy the parks. I was delighted to be invited to pass on my congratulations to the participating companies. The initiative has now been shortlisted as a finalist in the Community Engagement Award category of the Keep Britain Tidy Network Awards, with the winners to be announced at a special ceremony in Manchester on 6 February 2019.

## **Transport Portfolio – Tees Valley Combined Authority**

12. As TVCA Cabinet Member with the portfolio for strategic transport, I would like to provide you with some of the highlights:
- (a) The Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan is being developed for consultation in the Spring. This will include a suite of daughter documents covering:-
    - (i) Cycling and Walking Strategy;
    - (ii) Bus Vision;
    - (iii) Rail Strategy;
    - (iv) Freight Strategy; and
    - (v) Road Strategy.
- Darlington and the other TV authorities will develop Local Implementation Plans that complement Strategic objectives.
- (b) TVCA has been allocated £75m Transforming Cities Funding over four years to develop and improve public transport and sustainable transport networks. A programme of projects are now being developed.
  - (c) The Department for Transport has recently announced a new Large Local Major and Major Road Network Investment Fund. Business cases are in development for Darlington Northern Link Road and New Tees Crossing to seek entry into this programme or through Highways England's Road Investment Strategy.
  - (d) A strategic outline business case for Darlington Station has been submitted to DfT and TVCA is awaiting feedback. Work continues on the technical development to satisfy the next stages of the DfT's five stage process for the approval and delivery of new enhancement projects on the Rail Network.

## **Cabinet - Efficiency and Resources Portfolio Update**

13. Cabinet approved the Revenue Medium Term Financial Plan, and a proposed Capital Programme, for consultation, which included a Council Tax increase of 2.99 per cent for 2018/19, and the Schedule of Charges. I am very pleased that once again we have been able to produce a balanced year plan.
14. Cabinet received an update on the progress of Darlington Mowden Park's proposal for a Darlington Sports Village, previously considered by Cabinet in December 2017, and to seek agreement in terms of the ongoing approach in taking this project forward.
15. Cabinet gave consideration to the disposal of the former Beck House site and adjacent land at West Auckland Road, for commercial development and access, agreed that the land be sold, and that the Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with myself, be authorised to conclude negotiations in line with the terms set out in the submitted report.

16. I was very pleased to receive our external audit report once again giving the Council's accounts a clean bill of health and stating we are a Value for Money Council.
17. We continue to fund new ways to raise income for the Council in innovative ways as Cabinet agreed the establishment of another joint venture company to build houses for sale this time at Middleton St. George. Profits from these venture being much needed to support front line services.

**Stephen Harker**  
**Leader of the Council and Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**