

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Economy and Regeneration Portfolio.

Development Management Matters

2. The following sites have been Granted Planning Permission since the last report to Members:
 - (a) Detailed Planning Permission for the erection of 3 dwellings at Hurworth;
 - (b) Detailed Planning Permission for the erection of 12 dwellings at land adjacent to the Oak Tree Pub Middleton St George; and
 - (c) Renewal of Planning Permission for the erection of an access road at Durham Tees Valley Airport.
3. Other significant applications which are awaiting determination include an application for 1500 houses at Coniscliffe Park and an application for a Lidl supermarket at Faverdale.

Environmental Health

4. In Quarter 2 the Environmental Health Team dealt with 955 requests for service relating to 50 different subject topics.
5. Of these the highlights include:
 - (a) Food Hygiene 89
 - (b) Licensing Consultations 75
 - (c) Barking Dogs 83
 - (d) Domestic Noise 79
 - (e) Personal searches 264
 - (f) Planning Consultations 87
 - (g) Domestic Refuse 69
6. Additionally the Pest Control Service dealt with 233 requests for service and the Commercial Team carried out 141 Food Inspections.

Land Contamination

7. Darlington's industrial heritage often results in the consideration of land contamination issues via the planning process in order to ensure that sites are suitable for use taking into account ground conditions and to prevent unacceptable risks in terms of human health and the wider environment. Officers in Environmental Health working together with Planning Officers have recently overseen the successful ground investigation and remediation of two former industrial sites within the Borough which were redeveloped for housing. These sites were located at Alexander Street (16/00686/FUL) and on a site known as 'The

Sidings' (15/00659/FUL) opposite Darlington College also off Haughton Road. The remediation works included the removal and disposal of the most heavily contaminated material off site, placement of a clean cover in garden areas and installation of gas protection measures where required.

Local Plan

8. As a result of the Draft Local Plan consultation the Council received over 1350 representations, some of these representations have involved further discussion/negotiation. Due to that ongoing dialogue the Planning Policy Team consider it is prudent to carry out some further evidence gathering to de-risk the chance of the Plan being found unsound at Examination, which would incur extra expense and delay. As the Council believes it is now in a position that it has a five year supply of housing land there is a reduced risk in any Plan delay. The Council is not currently under the threat of Government Intervention.

Business Investment

9. Year to date, the Invest in Darlington website has generated 206 property search enquiries. The website and content is currently being redeveloped for launch in quarter 1 of 2019. This will include a greater coverage of testimonials and case studies of Darlington's strategic employers in order to demonstrate the wide ranging business base in the town, as a means to attract further inward investment from priority sectors.
10. Notable investments to report include Cummins, whereby a significant expansion and refurbishment plan is currently underway at the Yarm Road site, which will also include the reoccupation of Meridian House in 2019. This will lead to an additional 220 office-based personnel being based on site across a variety of professional and managerial posts. This is in addition to 150 new warehouse and production staff taken on to meet growing demand for Cummins engines globally. Magnet is also currently investing heavily in site improvements and new machinery with an £8m investment. And finally, Thysis, a York based injection moulding company has now taken occupation of their new premises off Allington Way, leading to the creation of 50 new jobs.
11. There are currently 2,620 Darlington residents claiming out-of-work benefits. This equates to 4 per cent of all residents and is slightly higher than the North East figure as a whole which sits at 3.8 per cent. Great Britain's figure is 2.3 per cent.
12. Of those claiming out-of-work benefits, 580 are aged 18-24 (7.7 per cent) and 340 (8.25 per cent) are aged 18-21. These two age groups are those which are most notable in variance compared to Great Britain as a whole and the North East.

Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and Work Programme.

13. The Council is currently delivering two initiatives aimed at supporting the unemployed, both projects operate from the One Stop Shop in the Market Place:-
 - (a) The YEI is a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and European Social Fund (ESF) funded programme and is being delivered by a range of partners across the Tees Valley; including DBC, Citizens Advice Bureau and Morrison Trust in Darlington. The programme supports 15-29 year olds into Education,

Employment and Training (EET) and currently runs up until 31 July 2022. Up to the end of September 2018 (Quarter 3) the programme had supported 721 young people in Darlington with 380 (53 per cent) successfully progressing into EET. Since the start of the programme in July 2016 DBC staff have delivered 284 of those supported interventions with an overall progression rate of 68 per cent.

- (b) The Routes to Work project started in July 2018 and is a DWP / TVCA joint funded project. The project is being delivered by the five local authorities and runs until 31 March 2021. Routes to Work is aimed at removing the barriers to employment for those aged 30+ and unemployed. To date, in Darlington, the project has already successfully engaged 84 unemployed adults of which 18 have made 'significant improvements' in moving towards the job market and there have been six successful job starts.

Town Centre

- 14. The revitalisation and re-development of the Town Centre remains a top priority for the Council. We have identified the four major areas for investment and development which include:-
 - (a) Victorian Indoor Market
 - (b) Skinnergate and the Yards and Wynds
 - (c) Northgate
 - (d) Crown Street
- 15. We are working with partners to bring forward these development sites and it is anticipated that they will form the major element of the Council's bid into the Future High Streets Fund.

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Economy and Regeneration Portfolio