

COUNCIL
2 OCTOBER 2025

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.

TVCA Transport Portfolio Update

2. As the TVCA Cabinet member with responsibility for transport the following sections provide a general update on elements of the portfolio relevant to Darlington.

City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Funding 2022/23 to 2026/27.

3. Design and development work is ongoing for the active mode and bus priority elements of the programme across the Tees Valley. For Darlington:-
 - i. Design work is complete for phase 2 of Woodland Road Walking and Cycling improvements and construction is anticipated to start later this year.
 - ii. Traffic modelling is underway for Bus Corridor improvements on the North Road, McMullen Road and A68 corridors.
 - iii. Work is at an advanced stage on accessibility improvements to North Road station to complement the investment made to Hopetown and the improved station entrance. The work will commence later this year, following the S&DR200 bi-centenary events.
 - iv. Delivery of the Darlington Station project continues to progress. Network Rail and TVCA are reporting some impact to the programme. It is anticipated that the revised entry into service date will be Spring 2026.

Transport for City Regions (TCR) Funding

4. TVCA has been allocated £978m through the Transport for City Regions (TCR) programme between 2027-28 to 2031-32. In January 2024, TVCA Cabinet approved a programme of projects and initiatives. Guidance on the fund has been recently published by Government and TVCA are assessing the guidance in developing the approved schemes.
5. As part of the programme TVCA Cabinet approved £250m for delivery of the Darlington Northern Link Road. Due to the time elapsed since this Link Road was last considered TVCA are undertaking a review of all route options. TVCA have commissioned consultants to undertake this review, and that work is ongoing and has yet to conclude.

Public Transport

Supported Services

6. All the supported services, including Tees Flex, have been extended until March 2026. TVCA are currently working with the local operators and local authorities to review the supported service network which will help determine procurements from March 2026 onwards. TVCA have not received confirmation of any further funding allocations at this point in time.

Bus stop improvements

7. TVCA have surveyed approximately 3,700 bus stop sites across the Tees Valley.
8. The survey is to help understand conditions across the network and also the level of work and investment required. This will inform a programme of shelter/stop programme of works to improve and standardise facilities.

Fare offers

9. Work continues to provide a fare offer care leavers across the Tees Valley. The 5 Local Authorities are working with TVCA to support the implementation of this scheme.

Climate Change

10. The Cross Party Climate Change Working Group met on 12 September, where the Assistant Director of Housing & Revenues discussed the work that has been carried out on our council house stock to deliver the housing services climate change strategy.

External Meetings and Engagement

ZIGUP plc

11. ZIGUP have received the very prestigious King's Award for Enterprise. Along with Cllr Chris McEwan, Andrew Perkin & Sarah Travers, I visited them to congratulate them on this achievement.

Lord Lieutenants Visit

12. As the Lord Lieutenant approaches her retirement, she spent a day in Darlington. Her visited included Darlington By The Sea, speaking to families and stall holders ; as well as Hopetown and the Library.
13. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are some of the meetings and events I have attended:
 - (a) Various Cabinet and Transport meetings at the TVCA
 - (b) Cummins International Delegation Visit

- (c) Visit to Historic Blackwell Parkland
- (d) Tees Valley Labour Leaders Meeting
- (e) Lola McEvoy MP briefing
- (f) Visit to Amazon
- (g) Rail North Committee Meeting
- (h) LGA & North East
- (i) Climate Change Cross Party Working Group
- (j) Darlington Neighbourhood Board
- (k) Gavin Foster – Editor, Northern Echo
- (l) Darlington Health & Wellbeing Board
- (m) Hitachi Rail Gala Dinner
- (n) ANEC Leaders and Elected Mayors' Group meeting

Councillor Steve Harker
Leader of the Council