

**COUNCIL  
25 APRIL 2019**

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**LEADER AND EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW**

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**Updates and issues**

1. Since my last update to Council, there have been several key issues which I wish to refer to below :-
2. **Ofsted Focussed Visit** – Inspectors spent two days reviewing progress in Children Services and their letter highlighted that we continue to make good progress although there remains plenty to do to achieve good. It is a credit to our team that good progress is being made on the back of getting out of intervention in a timely manner, some other Councils who went into intervention at the same time, haven't progressed sufficiently to get out of special measures. A big thanks is due to the Children Services team.
3. **The Covered Market MAM Ltd.**– recently revealed their plans for the Covered Market – Plan A which is fundable from within their resources as agreed within their contract with the Council. Option B which builds on Option A and includes an exciting Temperate Garden to the Market Square side of the market, would require public sector investment. This will be a decision for the new Council, but I would be keen to invest in what is our unique selling proposition (USP) for Darlington Town Centre and look to identify public funds to support Option B.
4. **Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)** – Community Safety was one of the public's priorities for investment and Council has invested in additional staffing measures in this area and I was pleased to agree the PSPO for the town centre. The PSPO is a tool to assist the Council in dealing with unsociable behaviour in the town centre and is something the public has been clear about. In terms of town centre behaviours, I was very pleased to see the additional resources the Police employed in the town centre when Hartlepool visited Darlington recently for a local derby football match. The Police recognise how important our town centre is to us and resourced it accordingly.
5. **Chief Constable Mike Barton** – finally just to say a big thanks to Mike for all he has done for policing in Durham and Darlington and we wish him a happy retirement this summer.

**Feethams Project**

6. Activity has begun on site for Feethams House – with archaeology/excavation works being carried out in preparation for commencement of construction. ERDF and TVCA funding has been secured and the 5-storey office building is anticipated to be completed in early 2020. Greg Davidson at Cushman & Wakefield and Andrew Wilkinson at Connect Property North East Ltd are seeking to secure tenants.

## Neasham Road

7. A pre-application has been submitted for 450 homes at the Neasham Road development site. The site is currently undergoing archaeological investigation works and gas monitoring activity with reports being circulated to Ecology and Environmental Health teams. It is not anticipated that these works will impact on existing plans or timescales.

## Stag House

8. Reserve Matters planning application for 465 homes has been submitted and it is anticipated that Highways construction works will commence in July, subject to obtaining the requisite planning consents. Contracts have now exchanged with Bussey & Armstrong Projects Ltd, the ESH/JV and Barratt Homes.

## Meetings and Visitors

9. **Darlington Partnership** – I attended Darlington Partnership Board meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. The Partnership received a presentation for the consultants CLES who explained the work they will be doing in support of delivering the Fairer Richer Darlington Programme. CLES will be undertaking an in-depth analysis of the spend of the Council and other public-sector agencies and recommending how, by the application of social value in procurement the money spent maximises the benefit to Darlington residents. Councillor McEwan is leading the steering group that is overseeing this work.
10. **PD Ports** – I visited PD Ports and had a tour of Teesport on a rather cold and wet February morning. Despite the weather, it was fabulous to see the port in action and get a good understanding of what the Port means to the region's economy. It really is an asset for the Tees Valley with much potential to add further value.
11. **Darlington Cares** - In total Darlington Carers members delivered over 11,000 hours of volunteering during 2018. But more important to that achieved the following:
  - Education:
    - Busy Readers – over 400 children got help with their reading
    - Homework Club – 90 children, fed and helped with their homework
  - Social Justice:
    - Food Parcels – helped deliver over 600 food parcels
    - Christmas appeal – Helping over 1000 families
    - Community centres & sheltered accommodation supported in numerous was
    - Period Poverty – helped over 1000 girls
  - Environment:
    - Bags of litter – over 600 bags collected
    - Kids in Cockerton – over 200 children given access to wildlife facility
12. Darlington Cares has adopted Fairer Richer Darlington as a priority and will increasingly focus its activities on supporting the programme.

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

13. As TVCA Cabinet Member with the portfolio for strategic transport, I would like to provide you with some of the highlights:
14. Durham Tees Valley Airport has been purchased and the Stobart Group have just been appointed to operate the airport. Governance structures to enable TVCA to oversee the management of the airport are still being developed.
15. On 5 February 2019, Cabinet agreed to waive the pre-emption rights that the Council held as a shareholder in Durham Tees Valley Airport Limited, in order to facilitate a transfer of shares controlled by Peel Holdings Limited to a company established by the Tees Valley Combined Authority.
16. Cabinet also agreed to the continuance of the shareholder protections for the minority shareholders, subject to some modifications, and delegated power to the Managing Director, in consultation with myself, to implement the decision, with the authority to make any minor changes required to give effect to this decision.
17. I led the commencement of consultation on the new Tees Crossing planned for the A19. This is a key part of the Tees Valley's transport infrastructure and we hope government will provide funding for this and the Darlington Northern bypass.
18. Work is ongoing on finalising the Transport Strategy for consultation and I have had a number of meetings with Tees Valley Combined Authority officers to help shape the strategy. There are some great opportunities for the Tees Valley and Darlington within the draft strategy.

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

19. At its meeting on 5 February 2019, Cabinet received a number of reports, including an update on the issues relevant to the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, and the developments that had taken place since the last report to Cabinet in July 2018.
20. Cabinet gave consideration the latest Capital resource and commitment position, to inform monitoring of the affordability and funding of the Council's capital programme and received an update on the current status of all construction projects currently being undertaken by the Council.
21. At the meeting, Cabinet also received an up-to-date forecast (Quarter 3) of the 2018-19 revenue budget outturn as part of the Council's continuous financial management process, and the latest projections demonstrated an overall improvement against the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) of £2.689m, an increase of £1.573m from the position reported in Quarter 2. The figures reported increased projected balances at 31 March 2019, and were reflected in the revised MTFP submitted to Council on 21 February 2019.

## **Absent Vote Signature Refresh 2019**

22. The Elections Team wrote to 2567 electors in January, whose Postal Vote was over five years old, in order to request that a fresh specimen signature be provided

as part of the security measures in place to ensure that their Postal Vote cannot be used by anyone else.

23. At the end of the six week refresh period, 2305 electors had responded, either to provide a fresh specimen signature, or cancel their Absent Vote, and 262 electors had their Absent Vote rescinded accordingly.

### **Local Government (Borough) Elections and Parish Council Elections 2019**

24. Preparations for the Local Government (Borough) Elections and the Parish Council Elections 2019 are now at an advanced stage, with polling taking place on 2 May 2019. The Verification and Count for the Local Government (Borough) Elections will take place at 10am on 3 May 2019. All of the candidates standing for Parish Councils have been elected without a poll being required. The remaining vacancies will be filled by the Parish Councils advertising and co opting to fill vacancies.
25. It is evident from the list of retiring Members, and the combined number of years' service given by those Members, from across the Chamber, that the Council will be losing much experience. I would like to extend my own gratitude and best wishes to those stepping down in a few days' time.

### **ICT Update**

26. Since the last update to Members, ICT Services have successfully achieved PSN certification for another year (PSN is the Government's Public Services Network and is used to transfer information between public sector systems) as well as continuing to pass PCI DSS quarterly tests which are the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards.
27. ICT also undertook a simulated phishing attempt across all IT users to gauge their awareness to spam emails and the risks these present. The outcomes were presented to COE/COB and information was circulated wider via the weekly Briefing and management cascade.
28. In addition to the above, progress has also been made on a number of architecture projects which include:
  - (a) Commenced development on the detailed design of a new voice and data network for the Council to be implemented later this year.
  - (b) Implemented GovWifi across Council buildings which supplements the existing self-service system. GovWifi is recognised across national and local government as a universal means of connection when visiting other government offices.
  - (c) Continued with developments surrounding the migration and deployment of the Microsoft Office 365 suite of systems and associated platform.
  - (d) Implemented measures on the Council's website to help mitigate against distributed denial of service attacks.
  - (e) Renewed the McAfee security suite.

- (f) Implemented performance updates on the Council's server/storage estate.
29. ICT services have also continued to deliver against the Council's service IT project requirements and have delivered further thirteen projects since the last ICT update to Members. These have included:
- (a) Upgrade to the contact centre system
  - (b) Upgrade to the AutoCad system
  - (c) Implemented the HSCN (Health & Social Care Network) links into Health
  - (d) Migration to the public access & enterprise version of the planning & regulatory services system
  - (e) Implementation of Modern.Gov for Cabinet/Committee report management
  - (f) Implementation of an online adult social care financial assessment module.

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