

**COUNCIL
5 DECEMBER 2019**

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

Darlington Partnership

1. The Darlington Partnership Board met on Wednesday 2 October. It received a presentation on the Index of Multiple Deprivation which is the official measure of relative deprivation in England. Darlington is still performing well in comparison to the Tees Valley and the North East. Overall, Darlington is in relative terms more polarized than elsewhere in terms of deprivation, and where there are areas of deprivation, these tend to be more extreme. The presentation was welcomed particularly by public sector agencies as it provided useful context for their service planning.
2. An update was also received on the 'Fairer, Richer Darlington' programme (now the 'Local Wealth Building and Social Value in Procurement' programme) outlining progress to date and a summary of projects being developed.
3. I had the pleasure of attending the first 'Love Darlo' Awards evening at the Hippodrome, where I was overwhelmed at the positivity, passion and pride shown by all the participants in the ceremony. I hope the Awards go on from this to an even greater celebration of all that is good in Darlington.
4. I would also like to mention the recent article in the North East Times of an interview with the Director of Economic Growth. The article highlights the considerable developments in the pipeline, and the sustained progress we are making across Darlington. Promoting the success of the private sector is crucial if we are to continue to succeed, grow and create the opportunities for all of Darlington to benefit.
5. A report is coming to the next Cabinet on a pilot project in the Northgate ward to look at ways to improve outcomes in one of our most deprived wards and the learning from this pilot can be used more widely.

Strategic Transport

6. The Strategic Transport Plan for the Tees Valley is being consulted upon and comments will be reviewed and considered in producing a final plan for which will be presented to Tees Valley Cabinet in January.
7. On the strategic roads projects an outline business case has been submitted to the Department for Transport for the New A19 Tees Crossing. Development work continues on Darlington Northern Link road to develop the Strategic Outline business case. Major roads projects of this nature have very long development periods and need to be built into long term government programmes which work on 5-year cycles. The New Tees Crossing project is seeking commitments during the next investment period which is 2020 to 2025 and the Darlington Northern Link road would be looking into a future period. I organised a tour for the members of

the Transport Committee with officers to see first hand the various plans. We also visited the Wheels to Work project in Redcar and encourage the take up in Darlington.

8. Both Darlington and Middlesbrough rail station projects form the basis of infrastructure improvements that enable the potential for increased train services in the future. It is the intention to submit an outline business case to the Department for Transport early in the New Year to progress Darlington station to the next funding gateway. I attended an LNER stakeholder event in York and raised with Network Rail the importance of the Darlington Station upgrade for the region and connectivity to Tees Valley.
9. Demand responsive travel will launch across the Tees Valley in January 2020 and this will be promoted but Members are also encouraged to promote this service in the areas that it will serve. This is pilot programme and as such it will be evaluated on how well it performs.

Council Plan

10. I along with Cabinet colleagues and officers have been working on providing a new Council Plan which will set out for consultation and ultimate consideration by Council the vision and key actions for the Council for the next few years.

Towns Fund

11. The Council has been selected to be a recipient of the Towns Fund, which if our submission is successful, we could receive up to £25m to help stimulate our economy. Officers are working on initial ideas for a bid which will be submitted next summer. In the meantime, the Council must establish a Town Deal Board, with partners across the Borough, and the proposal for the Board needs submitted to Government by January 2020 and the Board will work on the development of the bid.

**Councillor Mrs Heather Scott OBE
Leader of the Council Portfolio**