

**COUNCIL**  
**26 MARCH 2020 (This meeting is cancelled)**

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**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW**

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**Strategic Context**

1. The Council's overall strategic context has seen a number of revisions over the recent past. The MTFP has been agreed and I am pleased we were able to approve a 4 year balanced budget at the last Council. However, as we are all aware local government funding is to be reviewed in the coming year and this has the potential to change the overall MTFP. I, together with our MP's and other politicians across the North East, will be lobbying hard to influence the outcome of the review to gain a positive result for Darlington.
2. The local plan was also agreed at our last Council meeting and I acknowledge there were differences of opinion in respect of some issues. However, I feel that all Councillors did agree the need for a local plan, so it is pleasing that it was agreed. As we all know the approval at this stage is not the end of the journey as further approvals are required from the Planning Inspectorate. Growing the economy is central to delivering success for Darlington and the local plan is a key framework for growth, so it leads us into the final strategic plan we have been reviewing, the Council Plan, which is to be considered at Council this evening.

**Save our Loco campaign**

3. The 'Save our Loco' campaign to retain Locomotion No1 in Darlington has received full 'All Party' support and continues to build momentum. The campaign has its own brand identity, has been launched publicly in the media and a campaign group is being assembled. I met with representatives of the National Railway Museum, Locomotion and Peter Gibson MP on Friday March 6. After agreement was not reached on the location of Locomotion No1 I will continue to lobby for it to remain in Darlington. Having received the support of the Prime Minister this is very encouraging.

**Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

4. Members will have had the latest briefing prior to Council and that will be more up-to-date information than I can provide at the time of writing this report. From a Council perspective we are fully engaging with Public Health England and taking their lead. We are reviewing our business continuity plans to consider them against potential implications of the virus, in particular how we would continue to provide services to the public, especially to the most vulnerable. As you can imagine responding to issues will require the Council prioritising its resources and being flexible to respond to changing circumstances. Communications about what we do in terms of services to the public will be key.

## **Strategic Transport**

5. The Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan has been adopted. TVCA Cabinet agreed a further £39.4m of investment for a number of projects from the £256.7m Integrated Transport Programme Budget.
  - (a) Hartlepool Station Capacity (development work)
  - (b) Billingham Station Access
  - (c) Urban Traffic Management & Control (Tees Valley wide)
  - (d) Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (Tees Valley wide)
  - (e) Bus Improvement Corridors (Tees Valley wide)
  - (f) Electric Vehicles (Tees Valley wide)
  - (g) Wheels 2 Work (Tees Valley wide)
  - (h) A689 Wynyard Corridor Improvements
  - (i) Eaglescliffe Station Western Gateway
  - (j) Teesside International Airport Station redevelopment
  - (k) Bus Partnership (Tees Valley wide)
  - (l) Development funding
6. An Outline Business Case for Darlington Station improvements has been submitted to the DfT to secure commitment to the development of the project. Cabinet has agreed to progress with development and delivery of the early phases of the scheme with funding allocated from TVCA.
7. I launched the new Tees Valley flex service which is a demand responsive bus service for the Tees Valley. I would encourage Ward Councillors where this service operates to promote its use within your communities.
8. Darlington was the venue for a Northern Powerhouse Partnership's roundtable with local businesses and senior politicians where we collectively agreed to press for improved rail connections, HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and the improvements needed at Darlington Station.

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