

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

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**OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY PORTFOLIO**

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

**Darlington Station Improvements and Growth Zone**

2. The Council is to enter into a Collaboration Agreement with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) for the proposed Darlington Station Improvements Project and the wider economic growth opportunities in the surrounding area, including Central Park, the Cattle Market and Victoria Road.
3. In partnership with the TVCA a wider vision has been developed for the area to influence the proposals and to provide a rail gateway into the Tees Valley fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that can accommodate future demands for national, regional and local passenger rail services as well as freight.
4. A substantial element of the project is funded by TVCA with a sum of £25m allocated to enable and deliver elements of the project. The land acquisition and enabling stages in the form of transport interchanges and parking provision will be delivered by TVCA and the Council with the latter rail and station development delivered in partnership with Network Rail.

**Business Investment**

10. The Verve Group have moved into their new premises in the Whessoe Building at Morton Park. They have 42 staff currently and are planning to take on a further 10 staff in the next 6-12 months.
11. Work has commenced to support Amazon with their recruitment plans for the new fulfilment centre in Darlington. Amazon is planning to commence recruitment from April and open early Summer.
12. Deep Ocean have formalised their agreement for the top floor of Feethams House and there has been new interest by a potential new company to the region for a further full floor. The proximity to the Railway Station and advantages this provides being the main driver for locating here.
13. There has been a noticeable increase in pre-start enquiries coming through to the team, which are being referred to TEDCO for initial support.

## **Planning Development Management and Environmental Health**

17. One of the large housing sites at Burtree Lane has moved closer to commencement as they have signed their 106 legal agreement. Development on the early phases of the West Park including the link road are underway.
18. Negotiations are also underway regarding the proposed multi storey car park at Bank Top Railway Station. Significant improvements have been secured in its appearance and impact within the site.
19. Further work is being undertaken relating to the Development Management Charter, which sets out the reasonable expectations of both developers and objectors within the Development Management System. This is an important document which sets out how the development process operates in an open and transparent manner. In addition, a report is being finalised which will form a new planning enforcement protocol. This will demonstrate how we deal with planning matters when things go wrong within the planning process. A report will be brought to Members of the Planning Committee for consideration when complete.
20. A planning application has been approved for the refurbishment of the crematorium with associated chapel and facilities.
21. Officers from the Environmental Health team visited a premise called Jimmy's Lounge, 4 High Northgate, which is a Shish Bar and found that smoking was taking place within areas of the premises where it is prohibited under the Health Act 2006. This resulted in a Prohibition Notice being served upon the owner under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. Following information received from other enforcement partners that smoking was again taking place within areas of the premises where it is prohibited, witness statements have been obtained and officers are writing a Prosecution File with a view to taking legal proceedings.
22. Officers of the Environmental Health team have been dealing with a person allegedly living in a caravan or van at White Hart Crescent, Red Hall and who is causing anti-social behaviour. Having previously obtained a Court Order to allow caravans to be removed from White Hart Crescent, officers currently have no evidence of habitation, but the person's continued anti-social behaviour has resulted in a Community Protection Notice being served upon him in an attempt to control his behaviour. This is an example of Environmental Health Officers working proactively with the Police, Civic Enforcement and our own Housing team to monitor the situation and gather evidence with a view to taking legal proceedings if necessary.
23. Environmental Health also continue to carry out air quality monitoring in the Borough through the use of diffusion tubes measuring nitrogen dioxide associated with road traffic. Currently there are 17 diffusion tube locations around the Borough which provide monthly data and allow an annual mean to be calculated for comparison with the national air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide. A new monitor in Sadberge is now in place and the first month's result shows the level is well below the objective. The relevant Ward Councillor has been informed.

24. In general, the results of monitoring to date show compliance with the national air quality objective (annual mean) for nitrogen dioxide in areas of relevant exposure. There has been no need to declare any Air Quality Management Areas. Environmental Health will be preparing the Air Quality Annual Status Report 2020 which will be submitted to Defra in June this year which will include the results of the monitoring carried out in 2019 (15 No locations). Previous Status reports are available on the following Council webpage:  
<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/pollution/air-quality/>

### **Local Plan**

25. Approval was given by Council on 20 February 2020 for the publication of the Proposed Submission Local Plan, incorporating agreed changes as a result of consultation on the Draft Plan in Summer 2018 and a revised timetable. The new Local Plan will cover the period 2016 to 2036. This approval will enable the plan to progress to the next stage (Regulation 19) which will incorporate a 6-week period for representations due to commence April/May 2020. The ambition is to submit the plan for inspection by the end of August 2020 (with adoption anticipated April 2021).

### **Town Centre / Estates and Property**

26. As part of the ambitions set out in the Town Centre Strategy, the Council have acquired Trinity Church which is located between Commercial Street and North Road. The building has been derelict for a number of years and has been an ongoing location that has attracted anti-social behaviour. The Council is currently completing the statutory requirements to commence the demolishing of the building.
27. Officers are continuing negotiations with the owners of the derelict night club located on Commercial Street car park for acquisition and subsequent action to enhance the general area.

### **Climate Change**

28. The Council is continuing to work towards increasing its energy efficiency and reduce its carbon footprint. Actions already completed include:-
- (a) Switching to a zero-carbon electricity tariff
  - (b) Installation of new LED streetlighting
  - (c) Installation of LED lighting in office buildings
  - (d) Addition of nine electric vehicles to the Council fleet

### **Cross Party Working Group**

29. Five meetings of the cross-party working group have taken place. Much of the business has been fact finding, including:-
- (a) an overview of local authority housing and current building standards
  - (b) the benefits of a 20mph speed limit for the urban area
  - (c) an update in respect of tree coverage in the Borough and ongoing tree planting schemes
  - (d) Durham County Council's approach to achieving its carbon target.

### **District Heating System**

30. A bid has been submitted for grant funding to carry out a Techno-economic Feasibility Study for a potential District Heating System in the Borough. If the results are positive the next stage would be to prepare a detailed project submission.

### **Climate Change Champions**

31. Several staff have volunteered to be Climate Change Champions for their work areas.

### **Climate Change Officer**

32. The Sustainability and Climate Change Lead Officer is supporting the group in preparing the Action Plan to guide the Council's climate change ambitions. The Officer is gathering information and understanding what data is available within the Council to enable an assessment to be made on the impact of actions already undertaken and establish a baseline against which to measure progress. A draft Climate Change Action Plan will be presented to Cabinet as early as possible.

**Councillor Alan Marshall  
Economy Portfolio**