

Cabinet

13 March 2019

Council Activity Report

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

Councillor Simon Henig, Leader of the Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update on work to support some of the council's key priorities.

Executive summary

- 2 The report provides an update on progress towards delivering some of the council's key priorities.
- 3 This month's report covers:
 - (a) Inspire Transformation update – Crook Civic Centre Strategic site
 - (b) Macmillan Joining the Dots
 - (c) Good mental health
 - (d) Unique educational and cultural opportunities for our children and young people
 - (e) Regional business event

Recommendation

- 4 Cabinet is recommended to note the contents of this update.

Background

- 5 The council undertakes a great deal of work across the county.
- 6 This report offers an overview of some key projects.

Inspire Transformation update – Crook Civic Centre Strategic site

- 7 The first stage in our Inspire Transformation programme - the refurbishment of Crook Civic Centre as our first strategic site - is now complete.
- 8 Our Transformation programme was launched in response to continued significant cuts in Government funding of almost £250m and a reduction of almost 3,000 posts. Since our requirements have increased at the same time as resources have been reduced, it is clear that we have to do all we can to continue to improve productivity to ensure we continue to deliver quality frontline services.
- 9 It is also part of our commitment following unitisation to ensure our services and staff are distributed across the county, keeping services close to residents and benefitting local towns and communities.
- 10 Whilst it is early days in the programme we have already seen benefits following the refurbishment of Crook, which re-opened in May 2018. The number of staff based at the building has doubled from 193 to 399, and after just over six months of operation, there is some evidence of improved productivity, better staff morale and increased spend in local businesses.
- 11 The transformation programme will see the development of three other strategic sites across the county, in addition to Crook. They are at Meadowfield, Seaham and Spennymoor and this enables us to develop a new smaller, modern County Hall in Durham City.
- 12 Through a county-wide approach we will stimulate our town centres and provide them with an economic boost by dispersing staff across the county at our key sites, improve our resilience and through more modern ways of working our staff will be more productive and serve our residents better.
- 13 1,000 staff will be based at the new HQ (subject to planning permission), providing an economic boost to the city centre 52-weeks of the year whilst more than 800 staff will be relocated to the other

strategic sites, closer to the residents they serve and increasing footfall to the local towns.



- 14 The success at Crook has been achieved following close working with staff, members and trade unions. This has included providing practical help and support, training and equipment to enable our staff to adopt more modern ways of working.
- 15 Work is now beginning to re-develop our next strategic site at Green Lane, Spennymoor.

Macmillan Joining the Dots

- 16 Around 3,000 people in County Durham are diagnosed with cancer every year and an estimated 15,000 people in Durham are currently living with the disease – a figure which is expected to rise to 28,000 by 2030.
- 17 Cancer also has a knock-on effect on the tens of thousands of friends and family members who need support to adjust when a loved one is diagnosed.

- 18 Officially launched at the beginning of the year by the council and Macmillan Cancer Support, Joining the Dots aims to bring services together in order to ensure everyone in County Durham who is affected by cancer can access the help and support they need around non-medical needs. More than 90 people from a wide range of organisations attended an event, where Cllr Lucy Hovvells, Cabinet member for adult and health services, officially launched the service.



- 19 The initiative, the country's first joint project between Macmillan and a local authority, was set up following extensive research by the council's public health team, which included surveys, one-to-one interviews, using the Macmillan Outreach Bus and stakeholder events where local support groups were in attendance.
- 20 This engagement demonstrated a need for advice and guidance on a wide range of issues such as finances, employment and housing as well as practical support ranging from help with cooking and cleaning to coping with loneliness.
- 21 The team also undertook a mapping exercise to assess the support available around County Durham. This revealed a large number of services offering assistance, although not all were cancer specific. However, many people were not aware of the help available, were unsure how to access them or didn't think they would be eligible for support.

22 Ten coproduction volunteers, all of whom had experience of cancer themselves, were recruited to help design what Joining the Dots should look like. Halina, Veronica, Kath, Rosemary, Steve, Mike, Andrea, Allison, Beverley and the late Vicky dedicated many hours of their time looking at the engagement work and identifying issues they felt needed to be solved. Their key principles for accessing support were:

- A single point of contact (telephone number, email address, SMS number) to enable access to all support services;
- A named facilitator to help support identification of personal needs (through a holistic needs assessment) and access to services (through a support plan that is produced with the person affected by cancer);
- 'Go-to' people (outreach);
- To build on what is already there by bringing it all together;
- Where gaps are identified, support local community and voluntary organisations to bridge the gaps;
- Cover the whole journey (from diagnosis to living with and beyond or palliative and end of life care)

23 The Macmillan Joining the Dots Service has been operational since September 2018 and was officially launched on 24th January 2019. It is provided by the Wellbeing For Life Service. There are six facilitators who cover the whole of County Durham who are already making an impact on the lives of almost 100 people who are currently involved with the service.



- 24 Those already benefitting include Ken who self-referred to the service following a terminal diagnosis of cancer. Ken lived in the east of the county in a social rented property which was leased to his mother who had recently passed away. Ken had already asked to take over the tenancy on his mother's home but it was initially declined.
- 25 A holistic needs assessment, identified that Ken required support around accessing alternative therapies; preferred to have end of life care in a hospice and not in a hospital; and needed support with his housing situation.
- 26 A Joining the Dots facilitator accompanied Ken to his meeting with the housing agency to appeal the decision not to transfer the tenancy to him. With the support of the facilitator, Ken won his appeal and is now able to stay in the property. A referral was made to the Welfare Rights team and, as a result, Ken is now able to access benefits that he was previously unaware he was eligible to receive. A referral was also made to St. Cuthbert's Hospice and Ken now has plans in place for his death and is receiving treatment for his symptoms.

Good mental health

18. Improving the population's mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental illness is a key priority for Durham County Council. It is also a priority for local government to demonstrate leadership in addressing the mental health and wellbeing needs of local communities and council employees.
19. There is no health without mental health. Promoting and protecting the mental health of everyone is vital to improving the quality of people's lives. Statistically, one in four of us will fight a mental health problem in any given year. That is why this work is so important. No one should have to fear being treated differently because of a mental health problem.
20. As a council we signed the Time to Change Employer Pledge on World Mental Health day in October 2018 at the County Durham Partnership event. Time to Change is founded on the basis that we all have a part to play in changing the perception and stigma around mental health.

Time to Talk Day 7 February



let's end mental health discrimination

21. The Time to Change campaign aims to change the way we all think and act about mental health problems. It has already reached millions of people and has started to have an impact on attitudes and behaviour.
22. The council is committed to changing the culture and negative stigma associated with mental health and ensure that staff feel they can talk openly about mental health and access support.
23. Colleagues have been encouraged to make mental health an agenda item at team meetings, encourage all managers to approach the subject and make staff aware that they can talk about their mental health.
24. Since the council signed the Time for Change Employer Pledge, more than 100 colleagues across the council have volunteered to become Time for Change champions. The champions' role is to actively tackle stigma and discrimination in their workplace and promote good mental health.
25. Our health advocates were active during Time to Talk day promoting Time to Change at many of the council's sites as possible to encourage conversations about mental health.
26. Communications on the intranet promoted Time to Talk day and highlighted the approaches colleagues can take to help improve their own wellbeing.

27. For example, exercise has been shown to improve mental health and taking time out from the workplace can help staff feel refreshed and re-energised as exercise releases endorphins. Encouraging colleagues to talk outside of the workplace can also open up the conversation on mental health.
28. Training has also been developed to improve awareness of the importance of good mental health. The council's senior management team attended training towards the end of 2018 and mental health awareness training was launched on Time to Talk Day for Tier 5 managers. Corporate training on managing stress in the workplace and mental health awareness e-learning courses are available for all staff.

Unique educational and cultural opportunities for our children and young people



29. The council is committed to raising the aspirations of children and young people across the county, encouraging them to strive for greater things, providing them with unique educational and cultural experiences and instilling in them a belief that they can achieve.
30. The vision that every child can achieve their greatest potential is combined with the desire to foster in them a sense of pride about their home county. This creates advocates for the future who will help share the message that our county is a wonderful place to live and inspire them to stay in the county as they grow into adults, looking for careers and starting families of their own.

31. Working across a range of the council's departments, we have been providing children with access to some of the best educational and cultural experiences. This includes access to some of the region's and the UK's finest talents in their field, who have been helping to inspire them.
32. Last month's Durham Vocal Festival, one of the county's flagship musical centrepieces, brought some of the UK's most talented singers, musicians and composers together with choirs and musical groups of all ages from across County Durham and Darlington.
33. As part of the festival, local children took part in various workshops and events including:
 - Pupils from five schools, (Framwellgate School Durham, Finchale Primary, St. Bede's Catholic School and Sixth form (Lanchester), St. Bede's RC Comprehensive and Byron Sixth Form, Teesdale School and Sixth Form) worked with professional composer Paul Smith to create a specially commissioned piece of music called Dunelm Lux Aeterna (Durham's Light Eternal), which was performed by them alongside professional singing group VOCES8 in Durham Cathedral.
 - Around 70 pupils were selected to take part in a two-day taster course with singers and tutors from the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain. This gave them access to tuition and expert advice from some of the country's leading vocal coaches and singers.
 - Children from special schools across the county and the wider North East have been working with Dr Paul Whittaker OBE, a leading light in the field of signed singing and musical performances. Under his baton, hundreds of children joined together for the first time in a celebration of singing and signing at Gala Theatre.
 - Meanwhile, professional musicians from the renowned Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment came together with pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) for a specially adapted performance of Handel's The Fairy Queen, featuring some of our SEND pupils alongside the orchestra and our own music service musicians.
34. Continuing in the cultural sphere, Gala is set to offer local children the chance to be inspired by top children's illustrator Nick Sharratt, known for his imaginative drawings in books by authors Julia Donaldson, Jacqueline Wilson and Jeremy Strong.
35. Run in conjunction with our library service, the Right Royal Drawalong is an event at which children and families can come and get tips from the creator of much-loved characters like Tracy Beaker and Timothy Pope as he teaches them how to draw anything from dragons to unicorns.
36. The team at Gala is in regular contact with children and young people across the county as part of its theatre education programme. Offering local children the chance to meet and engage with working professionals on a range of

themes from technical delivery, development of dramatic works, music and dance.

37. Already this year 30 local children have signed up to a summer school (Act Up) to create and produce their own piece of work with two professional artists.
38. Last year, our relationship with Northern Ballet allowed school children to take part in workshops as part of *The Ugly Duckling* production before coming to the theatre to see the ballet and take part in a backstage tour. This relationship has been further developed this year as six primary schools have been offered an arts award for involving the children with the dance and technical sides of the production.
39. Other engagement work with local schools has included professional masterclasses and 'meet the cast and creatives' sessions as part of the Two production in October; workshops with the Muddy Choir in November; and, in May, school children will be working with the professionals from Teechers to explore the script, dialect and changes in education over time.
40. Our annual events programme also incorporates educational outreach work to help enrich the lives of our children.
 - Lumiere is the UK's largest light festival and in 2017, the art installation 'For the Birds' by Simeon Nelson, Cosmoscope, and, a collective of artists involved more than 700 primary school pupils from 25 schools across the county. They took part in art and science workshops before visiting the festival. Education and community outreach work will be a key part of this year's Lumiere too - the tenth anniversary edition of the popular festival.
 - Bishop Auckland Food Festival includes an educational outreach element. In 2018, Chris Bavin (from the popular BBC programme Eat Well For Less) and Anjula Devi, brand ambassador for the world's largest Indian food company delivered healthy eating workshops in ten primary schools involving nearly 500 children. The education programme for this year's festival on 8 and 9 April is currently being planned.
 - Returning to the music theme, our annual BRASS festival runs educational activities every year. Last year, school workshops gave 13,500 youngsters across the county a taste of how exciting brass music can be. As well as offering children the chance to play instruments, the workshops provided insights into different cultures and challenged preconceptions of brass music.
41. Our cultural portfolio, just some of which is outlined above, plays an immensely important role in the work we do to broaden the experiences of the county's children and raise their aspirations.

42. For a number of years County Durham has had continued growth and investment in cultural activity both through the county council, wider partners and cultural institutions large and small. In 2019 the compounding effect of this sustained investment in cultural activity has resulted in a seminal year of openings, activities, festivals, events and anniversaries – a year of culture.
43. Together with our cultural partners, we aim to involve the community as much as possible in #Durham19 and our hope is that by the end of the year, every resident and importantly, every child, would have had a chance to participate.

Regional Business Event



44. Encouraging inward investment in County Durham is a key priority for the council. Over the last three years, 40 multi-national investors have been attracted to the county through the work of the council, Business Durham, the economic development arm of Durham County Council, and their partners.
45. On 31 January, the council and Durham University jointly hosted a Regional Business Leader's Summit, which was attended by 120 businesses and stakeholders. Key note speakers included Heidi Mottram, Chief Executive of Northumbrian Water and Vice Chair of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership.
46. The regional event showcased all that has been done to raise the national and international profile of the county and share insight into future direction.

47. The new Powered by People initiative was also launched to businesses at the event. The campaign supports the county's drive for inward investment, jobs and growth and uses one of the strengths of the county – its people – at its heart.
48. The objectives of the campaign, which was developed in response to requests from businesses, are to:
 - grow business and jobs across the county
 - give the business community, influential developers, employers and partners; the opportunity to promote Durham as a place to do business
 - ensure Durham has a distinctive presence in a competitive market place and to promote our uniqueness
 - place the stories of the people of County Durham at the heart of our communications
49. To support the initiative, and with the help of businesses, the council has developed a brochure of business success stories and a series of short films – our manifesto read by people of Durham, a promotional film and a series of 10 case study films of different business from across the county.
50. With the help of local businesses, the campaign will continue to be developed as part of the council's priority for inward investment and to create jobs and growth.
51. A new quarterly business magazine for the county, 'D magazine' was also launched at the regional business event.
52. A further four business events are being planned venues across the county for the year.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- Ofsted Children's Service's Focused Visit – 4 February 2019

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Not applicable.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable.

Staffing

Not applicable.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

Not applicable.

Procurement

Not applicable.