

Cabinet

10 July 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) Investing in East Durham
 - (b) Supporting people into employment
 - (c) Making broadband accessible

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.

Investing in East Durham

- 7 With its stunning coastline, prime investment opportunities and thriving cultural base, the east of the county has much to offer visitors and investors alike. The council is working hard to support the regeneration of the area with a wide range of projects and initiatives recently coming to fruition.
- 8 Cllr Simon Henig, Leader of the council and Cllr Carl Marshall, Cabinet Member for economic regeneration, together with Network Rail and other partners, marked the start of work on site for a new £10.55 million railway station in Horden, which will link into the local, regional and national rail network. The scheme is expected to provide an economic boost to the east of the county and will play a significant role in the regeneration of the village and the wider area, with rail industry projections anticipating that more than 70,000 passengers could use the station each year.



- 9 The council has been working closely with Network Rail and Northern Railway on the project, which is being funded by the authority, with £4.4 million from the Department for Transport's New Stations Fund and a grant from the North East Local Enterprise Partnership LEP.
- 10 The facility, on South East View, is expected to open to passengers in spring 2020, with services every hour both north and south.

- 11 The council has implemented a series of successful schemes to address housing issues in the village in recent years, including an accreditation scheme for private landlords, providing grants and loans to help fund the renovation of private properties and a multi-agency clean-up operation focusing on environmental issues.
- 12 It has now developed a masterplan for the area in and around the 'numbered streets' with a selection of possible options for the future of housing and the environment in the area based on feedback given by residents during a public consultation held last year. Horden residents were given a further opportunity to have their say on the future of the area during a second consultation which took place last month. The options outlined in the plan are only possible if the council is able to secure additional funding from central government, so the final document will be used as evidence. The authority is currently seeking a meeting with the housing minister to present its case.
- 13 In nearby Peterlee, the town's leisure centre has recently reopened to the public following a major £2 million revamp, which has seen the relocation of the town's library to within the centre and improvements to the pool changing rooms and reception area. Significant work has also been carried out to the car park with the provision of 48 additional bays and a cycle shelter. As well as a range of brand new books, the bright and modern new library offers free wi-fi and computers with internet access. Plans for the project were presented at four consultation days which took place at the end of 2017. Feedback helped shape the final designs, with the provision of a new sauna cabin among the changes coming about as a direct result of the consultation.
- 14 Further up the coast, Seaham is currently the subject of a bid by Durham County Council for £1.6 million of Heritage Lottery Funding to restore the town's historic character. If successful, the authority plans to spend the money from the townscape heritage scheme on improving access between the main shopping area, car parks and the seafront and developing public realm areas in and around the town centre as well as the Rainton and Seaham railway tracks.
- 15 The town has already seen significant regeneration over the past few years and last month's inaugural Seaham Food Festival offered the opportunity to showcase the work that has taken place to visitors from around the region and further afield. The free event featured more than 100 traders selling a range of local produce and ingredients as well as dishes from around the world.



- 16 Almost 15,000 people attended the event, which featured an open-air cookery theatre hosting demonstrations by BBC Masterchef presenter John Torode and This Morning's resident chef Phil Vickery as well as award-winning chef Rachel Green and seafood specialists the Crabstock Boys. There was also live music, children's baking workshops and a visit from the Big Brass Bus.
- 17 A series of special events has also been lined up this year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Peterlee's iconic Apollo Pavilion. Completed in 1969 and named as a lasting tribute to the Apollo moon landing of the same year, the artwork was the brainchild of the Peterlee Development Corporation and was designed by artist Victor Pasmore. Its half century has already been marked with a stunning light installation by Lumiere producers Artichoke, which more than 1,500 people enjoyed over two nights in March.
- 18 The celebrations continue later this month with a 50th birthday party, which will be followed by the unveiling of another art installation in September and a landscape art project for secondary and higher education students.
- 19 The council is also working hard to encourage private investment across the county, and in the east, recently announced its plans to fund the construction of seven business units at Jade Business Park, next to the A19 and Dalton Park. Planning permission for the development has

now been submitted and, if successful, work is expected to start in August and take around nine months to complete.

20 The 55-acre site has the potential for up to 750,000 sq ft of offices and large-scale manufacturing and distribution tenants, which could, in turn, lead to the creation of more than 2,500 jobs. The site is owned by the council and will be managed by Business Durham, the authority's economic development arm.

21 Business Durham has also recently supported businesswoman Heather Mills in the purchase by her company VBites of the former Walkers Crisps factory. The site, which it is hoped will eventually employ around 300 people, will produce a new range of vegan sausages and burgers made from plant-based proteins.

22 And the council is also lending a hand to hundreds of individuals in the area through a wide range of initiatives including its Adult Learning and Skills service, whose recent success stories have included 36-year-old Donna Wilkinson from Peterlee.

23 Donna is now taking the first steps on her dream of a career in catering after completing employability courses funded by the service. In August last year, Donna embarked on a Food Industry Routeway delivered by Acumen, a community enterprise trust that provides employability and training services in the East Durham area. She then progressed onto Acumen's digital skills programme. After excelling on both courses, she is now working as a volunteer in a local community kitchen.



Supporting people into employment

24 Over the last decade, the county's employment rate for people aged 16 – 64, has been steadily rising from a low of 67.5 per cent in the second quarter of 2016 to its current rate of 74.6 per cent. This is higher than the North East average of 71.1 per cent but lower than the England average of 75.4 per cent. Below are some of the initiatives and activities we are doing to help people into work.

- 25 **DurhamWorks:** DurhamWorks is a partnership project between Durham County Council and nine organisations, and is supported by the European Social Fund Youth Employment Initiative. It has been running since 2016 and works with young adults (16-24 year olds) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).
- 26 The project involves us working with organisations and employers, such as Groundwork, The Cornforth Partnership and County Durham Community Foundation, amongst others, to provide support and training for some of the hardest to reach young people across the county.
- 27 The most recent information from DurhamWorks shows that over 6,000 young people have engaged with the programme so far.
- 28 Over 3,000 of those young people have been supported right through the DurhamWorks process. Of these, nearly 2,700 are now in employment, education or training which is over 88% of those who have completed the programme.
- 29 Kieran Stokes is one of the young people who found employment with the help of DurhamWorks and he features in a short video which can be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/xblwZaWTFcl>
- 30 The recent success of many of the young people we have helped was celebrated at our DurhamWorks Achievement Awards in May. Six prizes were handed out to young people who have received help from the programme, as well as the partners and employers who have supported them over the last 12 months.



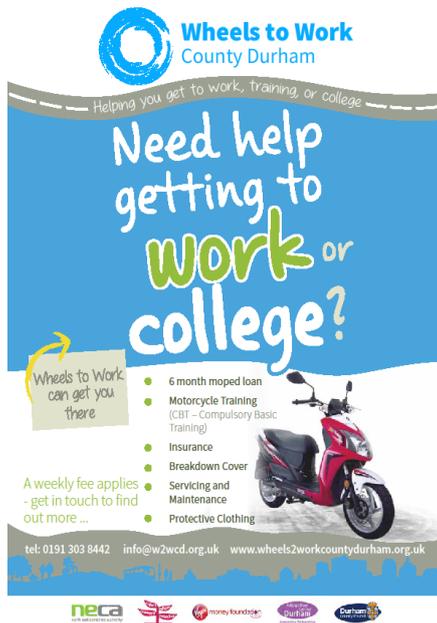
- 31 Pictured is Christopher Lambert picking up his award from Cllr Olwyn Gunn, Cabinet member for children and young people. Christopher, who won the 'Inspirational Journey' award, recently started a traineeship in business administration at Optimum Skills after overcoming a number of issues in his personal life.

- 32 Recruitment continues apace this year. In recent months, the DurhamWorks website has been reviewed and now includes a chat facility. This, combined with a facebook chat option, is now open to staff and participants and allows young people to get in touch in more ways that suit them.
- 33 Alongside our outdoor marketing and digital campaigns, DurhamWorks representatives are also attending popular events such as the county's agricultural shows this summer.
- 34 **Adult Learning and Skills Service:** Our Adult Learning and Skills Service offers a wide range of courses to learners who are looking to get back into education, boost their employment prospects, or further their skills whilst in employment.
- 35 The team works with local communities, a range of voluntary organisations, employers and public health to deliver the training people need to help change their lives for the better. They ensure that provision is local and accessible, with training delivered in more than 100 venues across the county; this includes a range of in-classroom and online learning opportunities as well as work-based training and apprenticeships.
- 36 As a service, they are proud to offer a broad range of vocational courses covering subjects including health and social care, teaching assistant qualifications and adult social care. They also offer general employability and back to work training, which covers a variety of topics ranging from confidence building, CV writing and interview technique. They worked with approximately 650 learners in 2018-19 doing vocational courses.
- 37 One of the key areas the service covers addresses the need of many individuals to improve their Maths and English standards – in fact over 30% of the accredited courses delivered in 2017-18, were Maths and English based training. This figure is the second highest in the region among local authority run training providers and is a figure the service is proud of. Traditionally, these courses have been among the hardest to get learners through but, despite the challenge that they present in terms of success rates, the fact the figure is so high demonstrates the team's commitment as a service to improving wider prospects of learners going forwards into the world of work, by working on the fundamental and basic skills that so many of us take for granted.
- 38 Some learners come with no desire to go "back to the classroom" and the apprenticeships offer is something that they find particularly appealing. The service has strong achievement rates where apprentices are concerned and, working closely with partners, equips learners with the skills to progress into employment, with 85.5% of learners in 2017-18, moving on from one of the services' apprenticeships into full or part time work.
- 39 **Durham County Council Apprenticeships:** To tie in with the launch of the council's Apprenticeship Strategy for 2019-2022, the council is currently recruiting 65 apprentices to a wide range of posts, ranging from entry to degree level.



- 40 The posts are available in a range of occupations including Business Administration, ICT, Financial Management, Civil Engineering, Highways, Electrical, Bricklaying and Horticulture.
- 41 The strategy outlines what the council wants to achieve as an employer and the positive action it will take over the next three years to increase the number and range of apprenticeships within the organisation.
- 42 The aim is to use apprenticeships to attract and retain the very best talent and to benefit from a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce. Apprenticeships provide opportunities not only for new staff but also allow the council to improve the skills base of its own workforce across the county.
- 43 The council already employs many staff who have been apprentices, including Corporate Director for Resources, John Hewitt, who started on a Youth Training Scheme (like a modern-day apprenticeship) with Sedgfield Borough Council in the 1980s.
- 44 Current ambassadors of the council's apprenticeship scheme today include Aaron Evans, an ICT apprentice, who says: "My apprenticeship has given me the skills and qualifications I need to get into my desired job. I have enjoyed moving between the different ICT teams to see different aspects and ranges of jobs I could work in. This gives me the opportunity to develop and learn new skills whilst working."
- 45 A copy of Durham County Council's Apprenticeship Strategy 2019 to 2022 can be viewed at www.durham.gov.uk/apprenticeships

- 46 **Wheels to Work Service:** The Wheels to Work (W2W) County Durham service has been delivering successful outcomes since 2016.



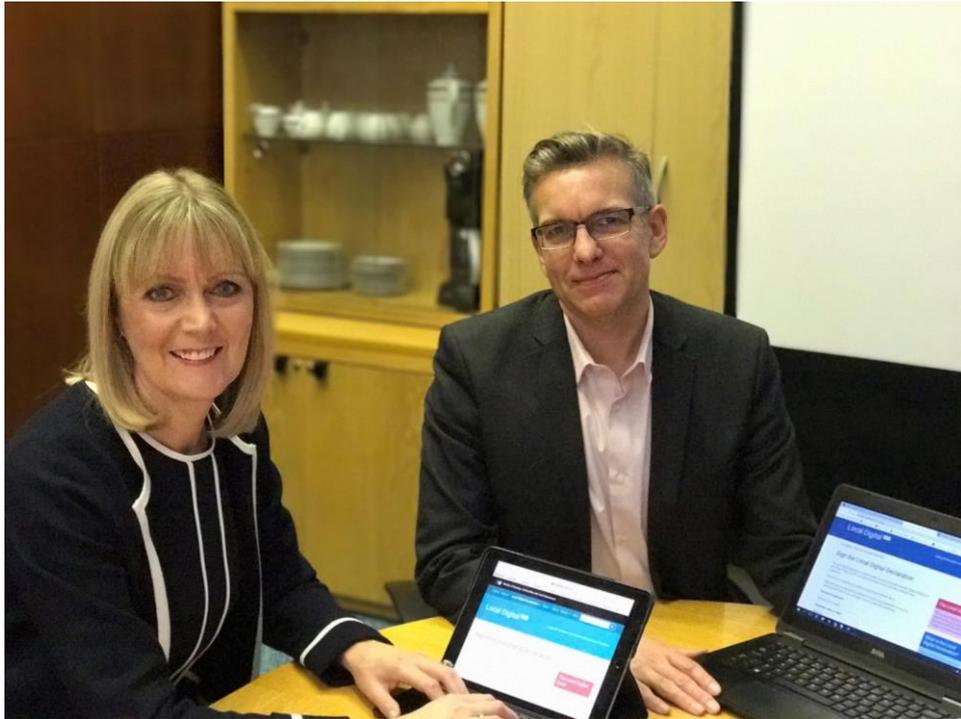
- 47 W2W County Durham was registered as a charitable incorporated organisation in 2015. It's aim is to relieve unemployment problems by providing transport options that help the county's unemployed residents to take up new employment or opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills.
- 48 Initially W2W was an 18 month pilot scheme covering Stanley, Chester-le-Street and mid-Durham AAP areas. However, it was so successful, that in 2018 the service was expanded to provide support to Bishop Auckland and Shildon, Spennymoor, 3 Towns Partnership and East Durham Rural Corridor AAP areas – seven in total. A board of five Trustees now oversees the project and employs three local staff.
- 49 In December 2018, the council's poverty action steering group agreed to further fund the service for 2019/ 2020, and extend it across the county, whilst the charity looks at ways it can be funded more sustainably.
- 50 Since its launch, the scheme has supported 102 people into employment, education or training through a moped loan scheme (figure as of June 2018). It currently has 42 mopeds available for use on minimum six month terms.
- 51 **Durham Advance:** The Durham Advance project, which has been operating since October 2018, supports residents (25+ years of age) who are unemployed and with health issues and specifically, residents

who are over 50 years of age and have barriers to employment, to find sustainable work.

- 52 The initiative offers a comprehensive package of advice, guidance and support to individuals and if required, any workplace adjustments.
- 53 As of June 2018, the project had helped 333 residents. The project will run until April 2021 with the aim to engage with 1,491 unemployed or inactive residents.
- 54 **Community Led Local Development (CLLD):** There are two CLLD projects which cover Chester-le-Street and Stanley and Spennymoor and Bishop Auckland and Shildon areas.
- 55 Operating since October 2018, the projects each deliver a one-to-one mentoring service to help people to find work, whilst recognising there may be significant support required to break down some complex barriers prior to employment.
- 56 As with the Durham Advance project, outlined above, the CLLD initiatives work across two themes; engaging with unemployed individuals and raising aspirations and working with local employers to source relevant opportunities to match up skills. As of June 2018, 57 residents had participated in the Chester-le-Street and Stanley area and 59 in the Spennymoor and Bishop Auckland and Shildon area.

Making broadband accessible

- 57 Access to superfast broadband is quickly becoming essential for homes and businesses. The Digital Durham Programme has been working with partners both regionally and nationally since 2012 to provide super-fast broadband to residential and commercial properties across the county. From a very low base of connectivity at the start of the programme, the county now boasts almost 98 per cent of properties connected to superfast broadband and work continues to close the gap towards 100 per cent. The programme has now delivered two large-scale contracts providing broadband to more than 125,000 properties across the region. The third Digital Durham Contract is planned to be underway by the second half of 2019.
- 58 Running alongside Digital Durham, the Digital Drive programme, delivered by Business Durham and Digital Durham provides advice, support and funding to small businesses in the county to get the most out of new digital tools and opportunities for business growth and efficiency.



- 59 Residents who wish to improve their digital skills, meanwhile, can seek the support of the council's library service, which provides friendly, informal sessions to help people masters the basics. In an increasingly digital world these sessions are important in helping people gain confidence in using new tools, while also learning about the opportunities digital skills can offer. During the last 12 months, the library service has delivered 612 such sessions ranging from helping to set up e-mail accounts to working with digital photographs.
- 60 The council's schools' ICT service provides valuable digital services to schools in the county, covering education, web, administration, security and safety. Building on the success of last year's successful Schools Conference, the 2019 conference is planned for July, with more than180 delegates already signed up.
- 61 Working across the county and alongside other local authorities, Durham County Council supplies broadband, telephony and connectivity services to approximately 600 schools across the north east, delivering a choice of affordable options for education premises. Within County Durham a tailored pricing model is used to make sure that schools have equal access to broadband services regardless of location, size or market conditions.
- 62 Outside of the Digital Durham programme, the council provides a high quality broadband service to a range of public, private and third sector organisations on a commercial basis. This important service not only provides revenue but also supports the authority's strategic regeneration and development ambitions.

- 63 Plans to transform Aykley Heads into a leading business park, attracting major investors and delivering job opportunities have already been supported by bespoke broadband and connectivity services supplied by the council. Incoming, high profile organisations are already running their services over DCC supplied fibre infrastructure, and the potential exists to expand to meet future needs as it develops.
- 64 The council's telecoms team is also supporting developments in the city centre ensuring connectivity and broadband services are in place, helping to attract business investment and economic growth. In addition, the council continues to provide new and existing business centres and industrial parks across the region including NetPark, one of the largest innovations industrial estates, with infrastructure.
- 65 Having established partnerships with all major blue light services, the council's broadband service now delivers robust high-capacity connectivity right around the region, ensuring mission critical highly resilient services, such as the fire service mobility system, are available 24 hours a day.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

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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.