

Cabinet

11 September 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) Welfare assistance
 - (b) #durham19 Year of Culture update
 - (c) Regeneration update

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.

Welfare assistance

- 7 In County Durham, the council is working with its partners to support people across the county, some of whom are in work but on a low income, who are struggling to pay their rent, mortgage or household bills. Below is an overview of some of the welfare initiatives taking place.
- 8 The council's Welfare Assistance Scheme has an annual budget of £1million. It has maintained this scheme at a time when many other local authorities have cut similar support schemes.
- 9 Most of the scheme's budget is used to provide short term help to those in need to meet daily living expenses or housing costs, for example, those leaving care or anyone who has been made homeless. Last year the scheme helped 3,436 residents with payments totalling just under £650,000.
- 10 The Welfare Assistance Scheme also helps fund projects such as The Durham Foodbank, the FEED project in East Durham and the NE First Credit Union. Last year, hundreds of volunteers helped The Durham Foodbank provide 19,336 food baskets across the county and the FEED project to distribute 1,742 food parcels.



- 11 The county has different needs across its geographical area, so the county's 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) each receive £10,000 from the Welfare Assistance Scheme to fund local projects to help people into employment, provide financial and benefits guidance and tackle food poverty. Last year more than 8,000 residents received help from 16 different AAP projects across the county.
- 12 The county's AAPs have also supported struggling families. In 2017/18, more than four million children in the UK were living in poverty; this equates to nine children in a class of 30. In County Durham, approximately 21,000 children (24 per cent) live in poverty, and 18 per cent live in low-income households.
- 13 Last year several of the AAPs ran school holiday programmes and provided healthy meals and snacks, supporting families and helping to combat holiday hunger when children are not at school and don't have access to a daily school meal.
- 14 Building on this work, the authority's Poverty Action Steering Group has recently allocated £150,000 of additional funding for holiday activities with food from now until September 2020.
- 15 £140,000 of the money will be divided between the 14 AAPs to allocate to schemes that provide opportunities for youngsters and families to socialise, be active and learn new skills, while tucking into healthy meals and snacks.
- 16 The remaining £10,000 will be made available for countywide projects led by the VCS Alliance, our One Point Think Family, culture and sport, and education and skills services and NHS Harrogate and District Foundation Trust who provide health and school nurse services for the council's schools.
- 17 The **council's family centres** also offer support as well as key family services. They provide easily accessible clothing swaps and some have free food collection points with the motto 'if you need it, take it'.
- 18 **School costs** can also be significant. The council offers training to help schools **reduce the costs of the school day** for parents, with ideas such as:
 - a) Developing a yearly planner of trips to allow families to budget and plan ahead
 - b) Introducing pre-loved uniform/swap shop sales
 - c) Reducing the number of charity events/dress-up days



- 19 The council has many **employment initiatives** to help the county's residents to into work, education and training. [July's Cabinet activity report](#) featured some of them.
- 20 The AAPs support the **Wheels to Work moped loan scheme**, which helps people to travel to work or training.
- 21 Since its launch in 2016, the scheme's fleet of 42 mopeds has been used to help more than 100 people into employment, education or training.



- 22 The council provides help to residents, particularly the over 75s, to **claim any benefits they are entitled to**. Four additional welfare rights officers have been appointed to focus specifically on claims for Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Pension Credits, Carers Allowance, Working Age and In-Work Benefits and Early Years support.
- 23 In the first three months of this year, the council has generated a further £622,000 in financial benefits for vulnerable people living in the county. Its welfare rights service also supports people who have been sanctioned to get what they are entitled to. In 2018/19 we generated £4.8million in financial benefits through representation at appeals on residents' behalf.

- 24 The council's **Housing Solutions team** was contacted 12,000 times last year for help with a range of issues, from landlord disputes to fleeing domestic abuse. That is an 11 per cent increase from 2017/18. The team works with people who are at risk of losing their home, to prevent this happening, and helps homeless people to find a new home.
- 25 The authority recently secured hundreds of thousands of pounds in **funding to help rough sleepers** across the North East.
- £700,000 will be used to recruit rough sleeper coordinators and workers to help tackle specific problems, such as homelessness after release from prison or because of drug and alcohol misuse.
 - £628,000 will be used to set up assessment centres in Durham and Gateshead to give homeless people immediate access to somewhere safe to stay whilst suitable housing is found, and to employ staff to help vulnerable people to maintain their tenancy.
 - £242,498 will be used to establish a lettings agency, which will help secure housing for homeless people.
- 26 The council's housing team **also helps residents keep their homes warm**. Fuel poverty occurs when you cannot afford to heat your household to a healthy temperature. In County Durham 33,500 households (14 per cent of all homes) are in fuel poverty.
- 27 The council works with public health colleagues to contact residents with cold related ill health such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and asthma who are living in cold homes. In County Durham we helped 912 households to claim central heating/boiler grants worth £2.6 million in 2018/19.
- 28 The **Managing Money Better scheme** helps households to access lower energy tariffs and switch energy providers. In 2018/19, the initiative helped 386 households to save more than £66,000.

#durham19 Year of Culture update

- 29 County Durham has seen continued growth and investment in cultural, sporting and heritage activity during the past few years thanks to support from the county council and its partners.
- 30 This year sees the results of this sustained investment with an unprecedented year of openings, activities, festivals, events and anniversaries. Designated as the county's Year of Culture, and badged as #Durham19, 2019 sees a year-long marketing campaign delivered by Visit County Durham, Durham County Council, County Durham Cultural Partnership and partners from across the county.

- 31 The campaign is promoted by a **Visit County Durham marketing campaign** which is supported by the council and other cultural partners.
- 32 The following information is an overview of #Durham19 activity since the last update was given to Cabinet in June 2019 taking in the period June to August.
- 33 On 1 June, **Durham Cathedral's central tower** reopened to the public following a three-year renovation project.
- 34 There was more food on the menu for food lovers in June with the inaugural **Seaham Food Festival** on Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 June. The line-up featured celebrity chefs John Torode and Phil Vickery.
- 35 Unfortunately, strong winds and torrential rain meant the first day of the festival had to be cancelled, and with-it John Torode's appearance, but thankfully the weather improved dramatically on Sunday and the festival was able to go ahead as planned.



- 36 Almost 15,000 people visited on Sunday. The turnout was so great that many traders sold two days' worth of produce in a single day, with some selling out altogether. Town centre businesses also reported a bumper day's trade.
- 37 Celebrations to mark five decades of partnership between County Durham and its German twin town, Tübingen, took place in June with an evening of free entertainment. **Tübingen50** featured a programme of live music, film, poetry and storytelling, all with a German theme, and was centred in and around Durham City's Millennium Place.
- 38 In June and July the country watched on as England won the **Cricket World Cup** after reaching their first world cup final in 27 years.

- 39 For County Durham the matches played in the county at the Emirates Riverside Ground in Chester-le-Street were also a major success. An estimated 70,000 people from around the world flocked to the county to enjoy the fixtures at the ground and to the fanzone in Durham City. Almost 70% of visitors were from out of county and even popstar Rihanna turned up to cheer on her team. The county ground, with the beautiful backdrop of Lumley Castle, was showcased to a huge global TV audience.
- 40 Retailers in Chester-le-Street enjoyed a boost to business with cricket fans stopping off on their way to and from the ground. More than 27,000 people enjoyed the free-to-enter Cricket World Cup fanzone, split across Millennium Place and the Market Place in Durham City, enjoying the cricket on big screens, food, entertainers, music and cricket themed games and activities.



- 41 Through the AAPs, 100 tickets were given to community and voluntary groups across the county and two local heroes, Janice Nokni and Jan Vincent from Aspire, were chosen to lead the Cricket World Cup out at the first match, honouring their community work towards women's development.
- 42 Record-breaking crowds experienced the excitement and diversity of 21st century brass thanks to **BRASS - County Durham's liveliest music festival** in July.



- 43 More than 40,000 people experienced this year's festival, a ten-day musical extravaganza which culminated in a free open-air party at Wharton Park in Durham.
- 44 During the first weekend of BRASS, the **annual Durham Miners' Gala**, organised by Durham Miners' Association, drew tens of thousands to the city. A fantastic celebration of the county's industrial heritage, it was great to see our local communities coming together and bringing their colliery bands and banners to march through the streets of Durham.
- 45 Since 1915, the home of the Durham Miners' Association has been the magnificent **Redhills: Durham Miners Hall**. In July, the council's Cabinet agreed a £1.1 million contribution towards plans to restore it and transform the historic building into a vibrant community and arts hub, preserving its rich heritage as a pitman's parliament and ensuring that it survives and thrives for generations to come.
- 46 It was also the **Apollo Pavilion's 50th birthday celebration** in July - at the same time as the anniversary of the moon landings– hence its name.
- 47 A free-of-charge musical extravaganza took place at the structure, on Peterlee's Sunny Blunts estate, featuring performances from Mr Wilson's Second Liners and Oompah Brass, as part of Durham's BRASS Festival, and Barry Hyde, lead singer of the Futureheads, who worked with local schools to create a new song to mark the occasion.
- 48 The event was part of a year of activities organised by us to celebrate 50 years of the Pavilion, which have already seen a light installation in March by artists Mader Wiermann commissioned by Lumiere producers, Artichoke.

- 49 The **Durham City Running Festival** took place at the end of the July. This year it was extended to a three-day celebration incorporating the annual Durham City 5k and 10k Run and a new family activity event, headed-up by three-time London marathon winner Paula Radcliffe, amongst other activities. The festival is delivered by Events of the North in partnership with the council and a number of sponsors including Durham University, Prince Bishops Shopping Centre and Atom Bank.
- 50 Almost 3,000 runners took part in the Durham City Run in sweltering conditions on what was the hottest day of the year.



- 51 Other activities over the summer period included:
- a) A visit from **The Flying Scotsman to Locomotion at Shildon** for just over 2 weeks to celebrate the museum's 15th anniversary.
 - b) Spectacular performances of **Kynren: an epic tale of England** every Saturday evening until mid - September.
 - c) **Norman Cornish celebrations** including a Cornish Trail in Spennymoor, exhibitions in Norman Cornish's hometown of Spennymoor, at the Mining Art Gallery in Bishop Auckland, and at Gala Gallery in Durham City, all marking the centenary of the internationally- recognised painter's birth. Celebratory activity continues throughout the year, including work at Beamish to rebuild Cornish's house as part of the museum's new 1950s town.
- 52 Looking forward to the rest of the year, we can look forward to the completion of The Auckland Project's multi-million pound **redevelopment of Auckland Castle**.

- 53 September sees a number of **agricultural shows** taking place including the biggest of the year at **Wolsingham**. Last year's show attracted almost 30,000 visitors providing a boost to the town's economy.
- 54 In October both the Durham Book Festival and The Take-Off Festival will take place. **The Durham Book Festival** headliners this year include Alexander McCall Smith, Joanne Harris and Mark Haddon. This year's Big Read is Brooklyn by Colm Toibin. 3,000 copies of the novel will be distributed to schools, libraries, businesses, prisons and university buildings.
- 55 **The Take-Off Festival** is the country's leading children's theatre festival and returns to the county from Monday 21 to Saturday 26 October with a week of world-class shows for families which includes over 70 performances in 10 venues across the county and a spectacular Family Day finale in Durham City.
- 56 The year culminates with the **tenth anniversary edition of Lumiere**, the UK's largest light festival, which will bring together favourite installations from past festivals, along with some brand new ones, from 14 – 17 November. The five previous Lumiere events have attracted a combined total of more than 840,000 visitors and brought joint economic benefits of £28.7million. Artichoke artists have also worked with around 5,000 people of all ages across the county as well as nurturing local talent through the BRILLIANT commissioning programme.
- 57 The first programme announcement was made in July with an open call by the festival's producers Artichoke inviting piano players of all ages to perform as part of a **spectacular new installation - Keys of Light**. This is an interactive light installation by Dutch artist Mr.Beam. Triggered by sound, the artwork is co-created by audience members who will take part in a series of live solo performances.
- 58 The full festival programme will be announced in mid-October.



Regeneration update

- 59 Durham County Council is committed to ensuring the county is a great place to live, work and visit, with a thriving economy, good job opportunities and plenty of places for residents and visitors to relax and enjoy themselves.
- 60 A combination of public and private sector investment is crucial to achieving this and County Durham as a whole is bucking the trend in terms of investment, with more than £3.4 billion committed across the county and a range of exciting new developments coming to fruition.
- 61 The following information is an overview of regeneration and development activity since the last update was given to Cabinet in June 2019 taking in the period June to August.
- 62 **Central Durham**



- 63 **The Riverwalk**, a new £40 million development in Durham City, is now open for business. The development created close to 200 jobs during construction and a further 120 new jobs in 23 refurbished retail units, 35,000 sq ft of new restaurants and six-screen cinema. The site also includes 253 student accommodation rooms and a Lane7 bowling alley.
- 64 Work to further redevelop Durham City's riverside is continuing, and construction has formally started on the £150 million transformation of the former HM Passport Office site. **The Milburngate scheme** will bring restaurants, bars and leisure opportunities to the city, along with a 92-bedroom hotel and 153 high-quality apartments. The development is

expected to create 400 jobs and phase one of construction is scheduled to be completed in early 2021.



- 65 Across the river, work has begun on the **council's new city-centre headquarters** which will be a third of the size and more cost effective than the current County Hall. Initial works on the site began in mid-August and main construction is due to start this month, with an expected completion date of Autumn 2021.
- 66 Around 1,000 staff will move to the new HQ building, on the former Sands car park, helping to boost the city's economy. A further 850 staff will relocate to the council's four other key sites around the county – Crook, Meadowfield, Spennymoor and Seaham - also helping to boost the local economy in those areas.
- 67 During construction, local businesses will have the opportunity to tender for contracts and approximately 250 new jobs will be created on site by Kier, who are building the new HQ.
- 68 The new HQ will pave the way for a **new multi-million pound business district at Aykley Heads**, creating up to 6,000 jobs and delivering a £400 million economic boost.
- 69 Work has also begun on a multi-million-pound scheme to **improve junction 61 of the A1(M) at Bowburn** ahead of the **Integra 61 development**, which will see 101 acres of industrial units and 270 new homes constructed in the area.
- 70 The £4.5 million road scheme, which has been funded by the council, Highways England and Roadchef, will see new lanes constructed and the current lanes widened to increase capacity.

- 71 We are supporting an ambitious **£377 million bid** to transform travel across the region, which if successful would fund a number of **major improvements to Durham City's transport infrastructure** between 2020 and 2023.
- 72 The North East Joint Transport Committee, made up of representatives from the North East and North of Tyne combined authorities, confirmed the region's outline bid for **Government Transforming Cities funding**, a £1.28 billion pot for schemes that encourage sustainable travel.
- 73 Projects identified within the proposed outline bid include the expansion of the Durham City park and ride site at Sniperley and the creation of an additional site in the Stonebridge area, complete with electric vehicle charging points; improved pedestrian access at Durham Railway Station, linking the A691 and the southbound platform; demolition and replacement of Durham Bus Station with improved facilities; the introduction and extension of bus priority lanes on the approaches to Durham City and improved walking and cycling routes into the city.
- 74 The outline bid will now be submitted to the Department for Transport, with a final business case expected to be finalised by November. A final announcement about whether the bid has been successful is expected in early 2020.



- 75 To the south of the city, designs for a **new Durham History Centre**, which will bring together archive, heritage and registration services for the county, were presented to residents. During a six-week consultation, residents commented on the look and layout of the centre, exhibition plans and digital access to services as well as the registration service.

- 76 The centre, which will be run by Durham County Council, will be based in the Grade II listed Mount Oswald Manor. Subject to planning permission, it will be restored and refurbished to provide a multi-use heritage centre where visitors will be able to explore nationally and internationally significant collections.
- 77 On the nearby university campus, construction continues on a new building which will house **Durham University's** expanding Mathematical Sciences and Computer Science departments on the Upper Mountjoy site. Work on a new £40 million Teaching and Learning Centre, with state-of-the-art facilities, at Lower Mountjoy, is due to be completed this month.
- 78 The university's £32 million development of an integrated Sports Park at Maiden Castle is also well underway and is due to be completed this winter. The university has also announced plans to relocate its Business School to the former Durham Baths site on Elvet Riverside and is working on proposals.
- 79 Planning permission has been granted for £8 million of infrastructure improvements at the university including improvements to pedestrian, cycling and road user movement around its campuses and work is due to begin this autumn.
- 80 **East Durham**
- 81 In July, plans for a new multi-million-pound business park development on a former colliery and cokeworks near Murton were approved.
- 82 The first phase of the proposed **Jade Business Park development** offers seven industrial buildings with service yards and integrated offices – all set in an easily accessible location, with the A19 trunk road providing links to Hartlepool, Sunderland and directly to major motorway networks.
- 83 The development has been made possible with almost £14 million of funding for highway and infrastructure works from the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and the Highways Agency.
- 84 Site works began in August and are expected to take around nine months. The road leading directly from the site to the A19 has already been completed. The 55-acre site, which will be owned by the county council and managed by Business Durham, has the potential for up to 750,000 sq ft of space for offices, large scale manufacturing and distribution tenants.
- 85 In neighbouring Seaham, a major new housing and development scheme was given garden village status by the government in June.

- 86 **South Seaham Garden Village**, a partnership between Durham County Council, Tolent and Home Group, will bring 1,500 new homes, half of which will be affordable, to the area, alongside shops, a café, a new primary school, a park, a village square, and a health and well-being community hub, which includes a gym.
- 87 Planning permission has already been granted for the development on the outskirts of the coastal town and work is expected to begin early next year with the first new homes being available by 2020.
- 88 It is anticipated that the development will create around 1,000 jobs, including 500 new construction jobs and 300 jobs in the centre of the village.



- 89 Work is progressing on a new £10.55 million **railway station at Horden**, which is expected to boost the economy and improve transport links for east Durham, following a ground-breaking ceremony in May. The scheme, near Peterlee, will link the area into the local, regional and national rail network and support wider regeneration in the area.
- 90 Durham County 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.
- 91 The station is expected to open to passengers in spring 2020.
- 92 **South and west Durham**
- 93 In July, Bishop Auckland was announced as one of 50 shortlisted locations hoping to secure funding from multi-million fund designed to help transform the high street and will receive up to £150,000 to work up detailed project proposals, based on its initial plans.

- 94 From improving transport and access into town centres to converting retail units into new homes, the Government's £675 million **Future High Streets Fund** will help local leaders to reinvent their town centres.
- 95 On 30 July, planning permission was granted for the creation of a £140 million business park with the potential to create up to 3,200 jobs in Newton Aycliffe.
- 96 Forrest Park (Newton Aycliffe) Limited will develop a 55-hectare site located at the southeast of the town for commercial and manufacturing use, including 1.75 million square feet of business, industrial, warehouse and trade units, a 60-bed hotel, public house, roadside restaurant and retail units next to the A1.
- 97 Forrest Park, a joint venture by the council and the Forrest family, supported by commercial property developer Richardson Barberry, will extend Aycliffe Business Park to become the largest in the North East and has the potential to boost the county's economy by almost half a billion pounds over the next 20 years.



- 98 On 1 August, **the new Azuma train**, built by the Hitachi Newton Aycliffe manufacturing team, stopped at Durham station for the first time. London North Eastern Railway's (LNER) new fleet was built by Hitachi's UK manufacturing team at the company's 700 staff site at Merchant Park.
- 99 The arrival of Azuma to County Durham comes just after Hitachi won the £400 million contract to build trains for the East Midlands Railway.
- 100 Work is ongoing on an **extension to NETPark**, the North East's leading science and technology park, with a 10-year strategy aiming to create 3,000 jobs and add another £400 million to the region's GVA.
- 101 Commercial property specialists Cushman and Wakefield have been appointed by Business Durham to advise on development options at

NETPark Phase 3 with outline plans being developed for an initial phase of up to 80,000 sq ft of new space for expanding science and technology businesses.



102 The County Durham science park has been a huge success since opening in 2004, attracting many innovative companies to relocate to the region and providing space for university spin-offs.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

Contact: Michelle Atkinson

Tel: 03000 268049

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.