

## COUNTY COUNCIL

24 February 2016

### QUESTIONS FROM AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIPS

#### QUESTION FROM 4-TOGETHER AAP

As always, Employment and Job Prospects is a priority concern for the 4 Together Partnership area. Obviously there is proximity to large employers particularly in relation to Newton Aycliffe but transport is still a major barrier for residents in the 4 Together area. In order to widen access to opportunities the possibility of re-instating the train stop in Ferryhill station would give residents better employment prospects in Durham, Darlington and Newcastle. Over the years there have been various discussions in relation to the possibility and the partnership are wondering whether the Council are on-board with supporting this proposal or would be willing to offer support in order to progress this issue.

#### RESPONSE

I would like to thank the 4 Together AAP for their question.

We recognise the importance of improvements to transport and accessibility in helping provide residents with employment opportunities. The east coast main line provides a key transport artery, supporting regions from London right up to Inverness, which collectively contribute over £300 billion per annum (Gross Value Added) to the United Kingdom economy.

Locally the east coast line provides for over 2 million annual journeys to and from Durham Station. However, the line does suffer from capacity constraints that limit the opportunity to expand the existing service pattern and to add additional stops along the route. Unfortunately, given the current constraints, it would be difficult to persuade the Department for Transport, Network Rail and the train Operators to accept any new station on the East Coast Main Line.

However, we are working with the North East Combined Authority through the Northern Powerhouse rail team to address these capacity issues, potentially through the reinstatement of the Leamside Line. This together with the Stillington Branch which runs between Stockton and Ferryhill, would give the opportunity of introducing a Tees-Tyne local rail service that would run parallel to the East Coast Line through Ferryhill.

This is the most likely route to opening up the opportunity of stopping trains at Ferryhill. A new station would be subject to demonstrating a positive business case and also finding the funding. We will continue to work with partners to pursue these opportunities.

A new rail station is a medium to longer term aspiration, but in the meantime, Ferryhill has seen considerable investment in its main bus routes. With Arriva now running its premium "Sapphire" buses on service 7, helping to improve employment and training opportunities by linking Ferryhill with Newton Aycliffe, Durham, Darlington and beyond every 15 minutes.

## **QUESTION FROM GAMP AAP**

The AAP is aware that the Council makes use of demountable structures to provide a range of services across the county. Are there procedures in place to relocate these structures for community use if they become available following service changes?

## **RESPONSE**

I would like to thank the GAMP AAP for their question.

There are procedures in place for the use of demountable structures. They rarely become available but, when they do, they would usually be disposed of in accordance with the process for any other asset disposal. This involves seeing whether any other Council service has an interest in having use of the asset and, if not, it is advertised for sale on the open market. We are, however, not obliged to accept the highest offer we receive if a disposal is likely to contribute to the well-being of the area. So if a local community type of group showed an interest we could support a disposal to a local group through our disposal at an undervalue process.