



COUNCIL MEETING

17 March 2016

GATESHEAD COUNCIL

REPORT FROM THE CABINET

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This is the report from the Cabinet. Its purpose is to report on issues for the period February – March 2016.

PROGRESS ON KEY ISSUES

2. PEOPLE

Children and Young People

Improvement in NEET figures

The numbers of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training has reduced, down to 5.3% compared with 7.6% for the same period last year. This is after a period of sustained and targeted work led by Connexions Gateshead.

This equates to 330 young people, out of a total cohort of over 6,300. Five years ago, this figure stood at 9.1%. What is particularly commendable is that this year's figure was achieved alongside a 'Not Known' figure of 3.3%, down from 4.8% last year, making this data very robust.

Of the 330 young people who were NEET, Connexions were also able to report that only 136 were aged 16 or 17.

The figures are up amongst the very best in the region and will be used to inform a 'Social Norming' publicity exercise, promoting the fact that most young people in Gateshead are positively engaged.

Early Implementers Innovators

Gateshead is one of 25 local authorities to be selected by the Department of Education as an Early Implementer Innovator to support the delivery of the additional 15 hours of free childcare for children of working parents, from September 2017.

The 25 authorities will focus on a specific theme to support the rollout of this additional entitlement. Gateshead will focus on developing a flexible offer that is crafted to meet local needs. Children and families will be at the heart of partnership working between schools and childcare providers, to ensure that any transition between provision is the best that it can be.

The first stage will establish the level of demand and patterns of attendance needed in order to determine where additional places are to be grown. Consultation with parents is being planned.

Syrian Refugees - Education

Last November 2015, Gateshead welcomed a number of Syrian refugee families, of which 17 were children and young people. Working closely with schools, the Education Support Service, educational psychology, Ethnic Minority Service (EMTAS) and special educational needs, these children and young people have now successfully been integrated into mainstream schools, apart from one young person who is currently undergoing further assessments to ascertain the most appropriate educational provision to meet his needs. Three primary schools and a secondary academy have taken the children and young people, following language assessments undertaken by EMTAS and educational information gathering undertaken by the Education Support Service.

All of the children were placed into schools via the Fair Access process to ensure there was transitional support (via the Education Support Service) back into education. Initial feedback from schools and staff working with these children and young people is that they have settled well initially. They are for the most part courteous, polite and well mannered, well behaved and eager to learn and take part in the activities on offer. They are ready to have a laugh and very friendly. They want to be in the classroom with their peers.

Schools have been very positive about the admissions of the refugees into their school and accommodating of their needs.

3. PLACE AND ECONOMY

Economy

Coatsworth Road Townscape Heritage Initiative

The scheme to repair and restore 30 properties is progressing, with the completion of three properties to date: Danskys and the largest project of the scheme, Adam's Continental Foods, and the Shah Jalal Majid. The Station Stamp shop will be finished next week with the arrival of the sign-writer to paint the sign boards. A further eight properties are in the pipeline for completion in 2016.

The business consultant Bsupplied, appointed by the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), continues to provide one-to-one business support and mentoring to all of the traders in the THI area and not just the grantees. The Coatsworth Road Village Association is up and running and involves both residents and retailers coming together to promote closer community links.

In January, Northern Architecture was appointed to promote the aims of the THI and to leave a lasting legacy by helping to improve local knowledge of conservation, design and planning. In the coming year, they are connecting with two or three local schools to involve children in various activities and projects. They will also issue a quarterly newsletter and publish on social media.

District Energy Scheme Update

Construction of the Gateshead Town Centre District Energy Scheme is progressing well, with the following progress:

- The Energy Centre steel structure is complete and work has commenced on building fabric. By the end of March, the flues and thermal storage tanks are due to be delivered to site;
- The contractor for the Energy Centre, Balfour Beatty, has engaged Gateshead College students to provide temporary art work for hoardings, as well as hosting site visits for construction students;
- Energy network construction has commenced, with almost 300m of excavations open to date in four locations, ready to take the first sections of heating pipes before end of February;
- Traffic management is being co-ordinated with all stakeholders, to minimise the disruption as much as feasibly possible. Details of current and forthcoming road closures for the scheme can be found on the Council's website.

The project has incurred some minor delays over the winter period due to weather, and is currently planned to be operational in Autumn 2016.

Environment and Transport

Road Safety GB North East – Regional ‘Look Out for Each Other’ Campaign

Road Safety GB North East (RSGBNE) have recently engaged with a publicity and marketing company DTW to assist in the delivery of a comprehensive two-year programme to address casualties across the region. The contract commenced in February and will run until February 2018.

The ‘Look Out for Each Other’ campaign will be a regional campaign that appeals to all road users to look out for each other’. The primary focus will centre on the need for everyone to share the road in safety. Particular emphasis will be placed on education in relation to junctions, the benefits of lower speeds and encouragement of compliance with speed limits.

Targeting of key road users will be undertaken through schools, colleges, businesses and individuals using social media, web advertising, campaign launches and through press releases and optional paid media. Each campaign message will directly support positive behaviour while raising awareness of the consequence of irresponsible behaviour.

The regional data analyst will monitor our key casualty groups throughout the duration of the contract.

Buses Bill

On 11 February, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, Andrew Jones, announced the Government's intention to introduce a new ‘Buses Bill’ into Parliament. Under the changes to be put forward in the Bill, local authorities will be given the choice to franchise services or enter into new partnerships with operators, although they will not have to use the new powers if they decide they are happy with the arrangements already in place.

The reforms are intended to give authorities the tools to drive up standards in the interests of residents, while also allowing the Government to honour a number of devolution deal commitments to provide local authorities with bus franchising powers.

The Bill will be introduced into Parliament later this year and the Government is hoping for Royal Assent by early next year. The detail of the Bill as it emerges will be a key factor for the North East Combined Authority as it considers how to move on from the QCS Board's opinion on the Quality Contract proposal for Tyne and Wear.

Clara Vale

Concerns have been raised over an extended period of time by residents and ward councillors regarding a proliferation of untaxed vehicles being stored in Clara Vale. In addition to the untaxed vehicles, complaints have been received regarding obstructive parking and the inappropriate use of the highway. An operation was organised in response to the concerns to investigate any untaxed or uninsured vehicles; any obstructive or dangerous parking; items stored in the highway; inappropriate work taking place in the highway and any other issues that could be addressed using available enforcement powers. During the operation, which lasted around 1½ hours, enforcement action was taken as follows:

- three untaxed vehicles seized;
- one resident warned regarding obstructing the footway with white goods and advised regarding fly tipping offences;
- one caravan served with a removal notice; and
- two further vehicles from the former Pit Baths site taxed and insured before being removed.

NECA Car Club

The North East Combined Authority has secured funding for additional car club vehicles in the North East. This will allow for the provision of three more vehicles in Gateshead. It is intended the new cars will be located in Gateshead Town Centre, Gateshead Quays and west Gateshead (probably Blaydon).

4. CONCLUSION

The Council is asked to note this report.