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**ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08**

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1. We are delighted to present the Annual Report of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee to Council on behalf of Members of that Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Members for their contribution to the work of this Committee, with particular thanks to those Members who participated in Scrutiny Reviews and who are referred to later on in this report. Their support to the scrutiny process is invaluable and the work of the Committee would not have been as effective without their support and commitment over the last year. I also wish to acknowledge the effort and the help of the several Officers who support the Committee, in particular Ian Thompson, from Community Services, Richard Alty, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Steve Petch, Planning Services Officer, who have all taken on the role of Lead Officer for Economy and Environment Scrutiny and Karen Graves from Democratic Services. Special thanks are extended to the following Cabinet Members for their continued support - Councillors Williams, Leader of the Council and Economy portfolio, D.A. Lyonette, Transport portfolio and Copeland, Sustainable Environment and Climate Change portfolio.
2. This year, the Committee has seen a change to its name and remit. At the start of the Municipal Year the remit of Environment Scrutiny Committee included cross-functional issues relating to Planning (except where specifically dealt with elsewhere), transport, highways, economic development, tourism, leisure and the Town Centre. Following the Council's decision to change the remits of the Scrutiny Committees, the Environment Scrutiny Committee was renamed Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee and now has the responsibility of scrutinising the following services: - regeneration and development, transport, town centre business engagement, tourism, climate change and waste reduction. Members have expressed a great deal of interest to undertake work in these new allocated areas.
3. Over the year, as seen in the appended work programme, the Committee has handled all the elements of scrutiny, including policy development, project progress, consultation and monitoring functions and reviews of particular services. It has gained in experience and confidence using various techniques as appropriate.
4. The Committee continues to look at ways in which it can, through the Scrutiny process, contribute to the work of the Council and enable all it's Members to analyse, contribute and comment on ways of developing the scrutiny process further.
5. As part of it's monitoring role it has continued to examine the Service Plans under the control of Economy and Environment Scrutiny which are Consultancy and Development

and Regeneration. Members received a summary of performance at the end of each quarter during the Municipal Year 2007/08 which clearly highlighted overall performance against targets. It is the intention of this Scrutiny Committee to set up Task and Finish Groups, as appropriate and necessary, in order to scrutinise performance in identified services and/or for individual performance indicators.

6. The Committee undertook site visits to Countryside Wild Spaces and the Council's nature reserves, in order to see the work in progress which is aimed at improving areas of wild open space, access to the, and levels of bio-diversity. The visits proved to be highly successful and Committee will continue to undertake an Annual Site Visit as part of its future Work Programme.
7. The Committee also continues to undertake street furniture inspections to highlight potential small-scale maintenance works, and requirements for general tidying and cleaning of areas.
8. On planning matters, the Committee undertook site visits, along with Members of Planning Applications Committee, to various developments within the Borough in order for Environment Scrutiny to fulfil its monitoring role of the Development Control process.
9. Committee was requested to comment on the content of the Darlington Rights of Way Improvement Plan which is a statutory requirement on all Highway Authorities. It represents the first opportunity that Darlington has had to fully review the value of its Rights of Way network, how it serves the public, how people feel about it, and how it is used. It also provides the evidence needed to enable the Council to access additional funding required to improve the Rights of Way network. The Committee will continue to monitor the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
10. The main Review of this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2007/08 has been Climate Change, a cross-cutting Review in which all Scrutiny Committees were involved in considering how to reduce the effects of Climate Change. Following a Climate Change Event held on 5th July, 2007 all Scrutiny Committees were tasked with examining various relevant areas further with findings being fed into the Action Plan for the Darlington. The particular areas given consideration by Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee included the role of Planning, including the development of a Darlington Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, the Local Development Framework Core Strategy Policies and Renewably Energy. In relation to Transport, building on the success of Local Motion, new infrastructure developments giving consideration to pedestrians, cyclists, public users and car drivers in that order and measures to reduce carbon emissions from transport. In relation to Waste, the monitoring of recycling rates of trade waste, recycling of business waste, increased household recycling rates and encouraging supermarkets to reduce plastic bag reduction. Finally, in relation to biodiversity, continued commitment to delivering the principles behind the local biodiversity action plan process, working with partners in taking action to protect and enhance locally important species and habitats, identifying opportunities to establish projects at key sites along green corridors and around the urban fringe.

11. Following approval by Council in July 2007 to revise Cabinet portfolios, this Scrutiny Committee included waste within its remit. With this in mind a special meeting of Scrutiny was held during October at which the Assistant Director, Public Protection and Assistant Director, Environmental Services gave Members a detailed overview of Waste Management.
12. The Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor is now nearing completion and as part of the Committee's role it has heard two progress reports from John Johnson, the Project Manager.
13. Improvements have been made to the Cocker Beck area by turning it into a site high in biodiversity, good for informal recreation and suitable as a safe route to school and sustainable travel. Arrangements are in hand for Committee to undertake a visit to the area during May of this year.
14. Several Members undertook a Task and Finish exercise during 2007 on residents parking schemes around Darlington College, following residents concerns. I am pleased to confirm that Committee was advised of the draft proposal to introduce residents' parking and waiting restrictions in that area to alleviate parking problems and it looks forward to seeing the results of that scheme.
15. The street lighting white light conversion programme is continuing to make progress and Committee, was thrilled to note that there have been 1,372 upgrade installations which have achieved a total energy saving of £47,000 per year. We look forward to receiving further update information in the next Municipal Year.
16. Other areas of work undertaken by this Scrutiny during the Municipal Year 2007/08 are detailed at **Appendix 1**.
17. We are very pleased to advise you all that Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has made a real difference to the people of Darlington. We continue to have street inspections around the Borough and pass any concerns to the appropriate Officer for action, which again, is appreciated by the people of Darlington.
18. Finally, we would like to express our thanks to Members of the Committee who have brought so much zest and commitment to the work of the Committee. It is determined to develop the Scrutiny functions using good practice and harnessing the experience and interests of all its Members, to the benefit of the town's population in the drive to improve services and look after the environment for everyone. The Committee is working more effectively on behalf of the people of Darlington.

### **Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee**