

---

**ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10**

---

1. I am 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 Steve Petch, Planning and Economic Strategy Manager, 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 Wallis, Sustainable Environment and Climate Change portfolio.
2. Over the year, as seen in the work programme (**Appendix 1**), the Committee has handled all the elements of scrutiny, including policy development, project progress, consultation and monitoring functions and studies of particular services. We have gained in experience and confidence using various techniques as appropriate.
3. As a Committee we continue to look at ways in which we can, through the Scrutiny process, contribute to the work of the Council and enable all our Members to analyse, contribute and comment on ways of developing the scrutiny process further. We have undertaken reviews and contributed to a number of consultations.
4. The Committee links its Work Programme to the delivery themes and work strands of the Prosperous and Greener Theme Groups outlined within the Sustainable Community Strategy: One Darlington Perfectly Placed and scrutinises the indicators contained within the Local Area Agreement which falls within the remit of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee.
5. As part of its monitoring role it has continued to examine the four Service Plans under the control of Economy and Environment Scrutiny which are Highways, Environmental Services (Street Scene), Regeneration and Cultural Services. Members received a summary of performance at the end of the Municipal Year 2009/10 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. Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has monitored cycling through Darlington Town Centre on a quarterly basis for the year 2009/10. Members of the cycling groups and a representative of Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) have attended, and contributed to, several meetings of Scrutiny to put forward their views on cycling in the Town Centre. We also gave consideration to the Cycling Safely in Darlington leaflet suggesting the incident telephone number be clearly highlighted and that a 'Flyer' version be made available to schools and cycling shops for distribution to cyclists.
7. 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 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 Programmes.
8. 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.
9. On planning matters, the Committee undertook site visits, along with Members of Planning Applications Committee, to various developments within the Borough in order for Economy and Environment Scrutiny to fulfil its monitoring role of the Development Control process.
10. With regard to Darlington Local Motion we looked at the evidence on how the travel behaviour of Darlington residents had changed since 2004, how that differed from what has happened in other similar urban areas and what conclusions could be made regarding the impact of Darlington's Sustainable Travel town programme 'Local Motion' on travel behaviour. We were delighted to welcome Dr. Lynn Sloman, Transport for Quality of Life who gave a presentation on the findings of a report commissioned by the Department for Transport to quantify results obtained by the three Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns of Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester. The report summarised that the overall programme was successful in reducing car use, and in doing so, offered very high value for money. The report also concluded that the evidence collected from the three Demonstration Towns was sufficient to justify a large scale roll out of Smarter Choices programmes and also made a number of recommendations to other authorities based on that work.
11. The detailed findings of an audit of Scheduled Ancient Monuments were a very welcome item on our Scrutiny Agenda. We learnt that an English Heritage report had identified monuments considered to be at risk and following the Audit, suggestions were made to improve their value to both residents and visitors. The Audit is an excellent document having a star ratings system which took into consideration access, interpretation, visibility and condition. Scrutiny undertook a tour of the Monuments following completion of the audit.

12. As highlighted in paragraph 5, Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee now has Culture within its remit. We were therefore pleased to receive an overview of the issues surrounding culture which plays a central role in enhancing the quality of life in Darlington. A comprehensive review of all provision within Culture is being undertaken to examine the business case for delivery of individual services and we will continue to monitor this very carefully.
13. Following completion of a review into the management and conservation of the Borough Art Collection we received a presentation on the value of the Collection and of the public interest following Darlington's entry in the County Durham Catalogue. We were extremely pleased to learn that pupils from Alderman Leach Primary School had viewed the Art Collection and now have a 'Painting of the Month' to raise awareness of art.
14. Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee continue to be heavily involved in the ongoing process of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy preparations. The LDF details the long term spatial vision and strategy, and sets out broad locations for development and selected land use and development elements of other strategies, namely the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Climate Change Strategy. We will continue to monitor its progress.
15. As a Committee we were given the opportunity to feed our comments into the consultation on the Darlington Compact. The Darlington Compact is an agreement between the public and third sectors about how to work together effectively to deliver the best possible outcomes for Darlington with Economy and Environment focusing on how this would impact on regeneration, economy and environmental issues within the Borough. The preparation of the draft Compact was led by Evolution with support from Council Officers. Scrutiny Committee made some recommendations which were then given consideration by Cabinet.
16. Following the concerns of a Ward Member in relation to the provision of street lighting within his ward, we undertook a joint Task and Finish Review Group with Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee. The Group met with Dave Winstanley, Assistant Director of Highways and Engineering and explored the duty of the highway authority in relation to street lighting, the criteria for providing new street lighting within existing revenue and capital budgets, procedures in place for prioritising capital budgets available for street lighting, future provision of street lighting and the Carbon Management agenda. From the work the Group has undertaken, Members were satisfied that the policy and criteria were satisfactory and that no further work was required

17. We continue to monitor regeneration, economy and unemployment activities currently being undertaken by the Council in response to the economic downturn. Following on from this work Scrutiny Committee has now established a Review Group to give consideration to how worklessness is being addressed by the Local Strategic Partnership. A meeting was recently held with Tees Valley Unlimited, Scrutiny Committee and Officers at which an Action Plan formulated by the Prosperous Theme Group was considered. Committee made some positive comments and gave feedback on the Action Plan prior to its further consideration by Darlington Partnership. Members see this work as a good example of how the Scrutiny Committee can contribute to, influence and scrutinise the work of the relevant LSP Theme Groups, and looks forward to being involved in further partnership working.
18. Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has a duty to monitor the Network Management Plan, a requirement of the Traffic Management Act 2004. Further sections of the Plan have been under development and the Council is expected to meet a number of criteria whilst delivering the plan. We will continue to monitor the Network Management Plan throughout 2010/2011.
19. As part of this Scrutiny Committee's remit in relation to the environment we were pleased to note the progress made in the Carbon Trust's Local Authority Carbon Management Programme (LACM). Darlington is one of 63 Local Authorities taking part in Phase 7 of the Programme which provides technical and change management supports to help assess potential carbon emissions savings from the Council's operations. We are very pleased to note that the Council plans to contribute to meeting reduction targets and set an example to the rest of the community and businesses in Darlington.
20. Conservation Area Appraisals continue to be produced with a target of two or three per year in line with the Conservation Appraisals programme. There are 16 Conservation Areas which had been designated between 1968 and 1997 and we welcome the appraisals as they help in the achievement of high quality and distinctive development and regeneration for the Borough of Darlington. A recent programme of appraisals had updated six Conservation Areas and this Committee has suggested an area which could be given Conservation Area status and Arts and Crafts houses located in Darlington being added to a list of buildings of local interest.
21. Other areas of work undertaken by this Scrutiny during the Municipal Year 2009/10 are detailed at **Appendix 1**.
22. We regularly received reports on the work of both the Green and Prosperous Theme Groups and welcome the opportunity to see the aspects of work both Groups are undertaking.
23. We continue to support the delivery of the Darlington Climate Change Action Plan following the review undertaken by this Scrutiny Committee during 2008/09.
24. I am very pleased to advise you all that Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has made a real difference to the people of Darlington.

25. Finally, I would like to express my 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.

### **Chair of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee**