

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14th June, 2012

PRESENT – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Carson, Harman, L. Hughes Lawton and E.A. Richmond. (6)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin, Cossins, Grundy, Lewis and Wright. (5)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Landers, D.A. Lyonette and McNab. (3)

MVA Consultants – Stephen Campopiano and John Colgan. (2)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Steve Petch, Head of Strategy and Commissioning, Karen Johnson, Planning Officer, Rob George, Head of Parks and Countryside, Simon Houldsworth, Principal Policy Officer, Regeneration, Greg McDougal, Policy Officer (Transport) and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

P2. TIME OF MEETINGS - RESOLVED – That, for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2012/13, meetings of this Committee, as detailed in the programme of meetings approved at Annual Council at Minute 6/May/12 be held at 9.30am.

P3. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 19th April, 2012.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

P4. SCRUTINY – WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13 – The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the current Municipal Year.

The submitted report outlined those areas where this Scrutiny Committee had previously identified it would like to focus its work over the next Municipal Year namely, Civil Parking Enforcement, Town Centre Fringe, Local Development Framework, Housing Strategy, Economic Strategy and Transformation Projects.

It was also emphasised that the work programme was a rolling programme and any Member of this Scrutiny could request an item to be included provided that a Quad of Aims had been submitted to the Scrutiny Committee prior to ensure that it contributed to the strategic aims of the Council.

The submitted report outlined the original Work Programme and requested Members to reconsider the Work Programme to accommodate further issues that need to be included and to approve the Terms of Reference for Refuse collection (Wheeled Bins)..

Discussion ensued on the need for a special meeting to be arranged during August/September to give consideration to the Economic Strategy and on the need to establish a Review Group to give

consideration to issues raised around Arriva. Following a question the Head of Strategy and Commissioning agreed to investigate the current situation with regard to Digital Strategy and to the empty homes in the Borough which would be considered under the Housing Strategy at a later date.

RESOLVED – (a) That the current status of the Work Programme be noted.

(b) That the submitted Terms of Reference in respect of Refuse Collection (Wheeled Bins) appended to the report, be approved.

(c) That the Head of Strategy and Commissioning investigate the current situation with regard to Digital Strategy.

(d) That a meeting be arranged with Arriva to consider concerns raised during July, 2012.

P5. PARKING STRATEGY – A PowerPoint Presentation was given by MVA Consultants which outlined issues surrounding parking within the Borough and in particular Darlington Town Centre. Committee were informed of the Tasks to be undertaken; initial thoughts on parking demand; results of a user survey undertaken on Monday and Saturday; observations around local issues, traffic management and Public transport operation; and several options to consider when formulating the Parking Strategy.

Discussion ensued on the impact of private car parks; residents parking; the level of parking stock; the need to encourage use of short stay car parking for Town Centre shoppers; fines from car parks being revenue neutral' the need to upgrade some of the Town Centre car parks and to provide more car parking facilities at Darlington Memorial Hospital and Darlington College.

RESOLVED – (a) That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to Mr. Campopiano and Mr. Colgan for their informative presentation.

(b) That the views of this Scrutiny Committee be forwarded as part of the consultation with regard to the Parking Strategy.

P6. DARLINGTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PLANNING

OBLIGATIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – The Director of Place submitted a report (previously circulated) which provided Members with more detailed information in relation to the operation of the proposed planning obligations system set out in the draft Local Development Framework (LDF) Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning document (draft Planning Obligations SOD) as the basis for securing developer contributions , known as planning obligations or a Section 106 agreement, for infrastructure from new development. A key part of the production of the Planning Obligations SPD is the community and stakeholder engagement that, subject to Cabinet's agreement, will run from 27th June to 18th July, 2012.

Discussion ensued on the possible reduction in green and open spaces; lack of community involvement in decision-making; maintenance costs; the level and amount of consultation undertaken by developers and affected parties; local issues and priorities within the document; the introduction of a Community Infrastructure in 2012; introduction of a planning charge to match infrastructure; and different use classes being allocated to zones.

References were also made to affordable housing being made to more affluent areas of the town; the amount of school places available; and utilities companies being aware of plans coming forward. Members were assured that the document was updated annually and could be amended as and when necessary.

RESOLVED – (a) That the approach and content of the draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document be noted.

(b) That the comments made at this Scrutiny Committee be taken forward as part of the consultation exercise.

P7. DRAFT DARLINGTON GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – The Director of Place submitted a report (previously circulated) which summarised the approach and content of the draft Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy (GI Strategy) and its accompanying Action Plan as the basis for delivering a strategic, co-ordinated framework for the future management and development of the Borough’s green infrastructure network to 2026.

The submitted report stated that many different organisations, community groups and Council Services had an interest in Darlington’s green infrastructure which was well used for recreation, biodiversity and food production and it was therefore important that a strategic approach to green infrastructure management and development is taken through a GI Strategy.

Detailed information was provided on the scope and approach to the GI Strategy, partnership working, GI Action Plan, resource implications, community and stakeholder consultation and the next steps following the end of the consultation period.

Discussion ensued on the Denes area being clarified, booklets available advertising walks in the Borough, consultation around the creation of wildlife areas and the perceived problems they cause such as rats, dog fouling and foxes. References were also made to the financial implications around maintenance.

Committee were also advised that the GI Strategy would become part of the Local Development Framework

RESOLVED – (a) That the emerging GI Strategy be noted and welcomed.

(b) That, following the consultation exercise, the Strategy be submitted to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

P8. POLICY REVIEW – REVIEW OF PROGRESS ON POLICY REVIEW ITEMS (1) CULTURAL PROVISION REVIEW GROUP - Submitted – The Notes of the meetings of the Refuse Collection Review Group held on 17th May, 2012.

RESOLVED – (a) That the notes be received with the inclusion of Councillor E.A. Richmond in the list of Apologies.

(b) That the progress of the Review Group be noted.

(2) REFUSE COLLECTION REVIEW GROUP – Submitted – The Notes of the meeting of the Review Group held on 18th May, 2012.

RESOLVED – (a) That the notes be received.

(b) That the progress of the Review Group be noted.

(c) That arrangements be made for a small number of Members to undertake a visit to Durham County Council on 10th July, 2012.

(d) That the next meeting of this Review Group be held on 16th July, 2012.
