

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14th February, 2013

PRESENT – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Carson, Cossins, Grundy, L. Hughes, Lawton, Lewis, E.A. Richmond and Wright. (9)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin and Harman. (2)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor D.A. Lyonette. (1)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Steve Petch, Head of Strategy and Commissioning, Tim Crawshaw, Principal Planning Officer and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

P27. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 20th December, 2012.

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

P28. MATTERS ARISING – Pursuant to Minute P22/Dec/12, several Members of Place Scrutiny Committee undertook a Street Furniture walkabout on 7th February, 2013. A list of the issues raised was circulated at the meeting.

P29. 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 and Economic Strategy.

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.

Discussion ensued on the Digital Inclusion Strategy and the effect of the recent announcement by British Telecom that thousands of homes and businesses in the Tees Valley and County Durham would benefit from an expansion of the company's fibre broadband network, set to roll out in spring next year. A Member requested that the

paper Councillor Hughes presented to Members on this subject be circulated to all Members of Scrutiny.

References were also made to Place Scrutiny Committee being consulted on the Local Plan Preferred Options. The Options, which feed into the Carving Parking and Town Centre Strategies, would be finalised June/July 2013. It was also stated that the Business Site and Premises Review was also included within the Local Plan and therefore this item was to be removed from the Work Programme.

Scrutiny was also advised that as part of the MTFP Process Cabinet let Budget Advisory Panels were to be established and all Members would be part of that process.

In relation to the Refuse Collection Review it was suggested that the next meeting be held prior to the round changes in April, with regards to Cultural Provision, Committee were advised that the next meeting had been arranged for 14th March, 2013 and the Town Markets Review would be established after the next meeting of Scrutiny as the issues around the Markets would be clearer.

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

(b) That the paper which Councillor L. Hughes presented to the Scrutiny Chairs on Digital Inclusion be forwarded to Members of this Committee.

(c) That Business Site and Premises Review be removed from the Work Programme as it forms of the Local Plan.

(d) That the next meeting of the Review Collection Review be arranged prior to the round changes scheduled for April.

(e) That Members note the arrangements for the next meeting of the Cultural Provision Review Group.

(f) That the Work Programme be updated to reflect the decisions of this Scrutiny Committee.

P30. TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY – The Director of Place submitted a report (previously circulated) giving Members the opportunity to comment on the engagement process and emerging outcomes on the Town Centre Strategy work. A PowerPoint presentation accompanied the report.

The submitted report stated that following adoption of the Strategy by Cabinet on 4th December 2012 various issues were identified for further work during 2013 and another round of engagement has been planned around car parking, bus and coach facilities and the vision for the markets.

Particular reference was made to the key principles guiding the regeneration of the Town Centre and of the vision for the Town Centre which included a focus on leisure and office development in the Feethams area; further promotion of the larger shops for non-food retail; improvement and investment in the covered market; continued support of the independent retail sector to the south and west of the Town Centre; rationalisation/improvement of bus and coach facilities to improve access;

improvements to the accessibility, convenience and quality of car parking facilities; and development of the evening economy and cultural life of the Town.

An engagement plan (also previously circulated) identified the process of gathering views and developing options.

Discussion ensued on the active frontages of the proposed leisure development in Feethams with the emphasis of the development being predominantly leisure, not retail and the current stage of the negotiations with developers. References were made to the provision of a food store at Garden Street and the remodelling of the Northgate Roundabout and subways which would be required to enable the development to proceed. Members debated the merits of siting a food store in this area.

The effects of remodelling the Northgate Roundabout and subway were highlighted on a map of the area and included better traffic management and pedestrian walkways to Northgate which would improve footfall to further retail outlets. It was stated that the public had concerns regarding the current bus loop around the Town Centre which exacerbated congestion around the Prebend Row and Tubwell Row areas of the Town Centre. It was suggested that an In Town Bus Service or the use of rickshaws could be explored to ease the congestion. Access to bus services by the production of a car parking ticket was also explored.

Members debated the merits of a bus station in the Town and as the long term plan included the removal of Skippers roundabout to make the area more pedestrian friendly, suggestions included siting the bus station on the Skippers Garage site. It was also suggested that instead of a bus station several access points within the Town Centre be provided, each having shelters and w.c. facilities and within double road areas to ensure less traffic congestion. Members were also keen to provide a bus service to both the Parkgate and Central Park areas.

The process for engaging on Town Centre regeneration, transport and public realm themes was highlighted and Members were pleased to note how much consultation would be undertaken.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

P31. SCRUTINY REVIEW - CULTURAL PROVISION IN THE BOROUGH –

Submitted -- The notes of the meeting held on 24th January, 2013.

Discussion ensued on the merits of providing a Arts Hub following the relocation of the various groups and organisations.

RESOLVED – (a) That the notes be approved as a correct record.

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

(c) That it be noted that the next meeting of the Review Group is scheduled for 14th March and to which a representative of Darlington for Culture has been invited.
