

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th September, 2011

PRESENT – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Baldwin, Carson, Coultas, Harman, Lewis, Richmond and Wright. (8)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Cossins, L. Hughes, Lawton and McEwan. (4)

ABSENT – (0)

OFFICERS – Richard Alty, Director of Place, Steve Petch, Planning and Economic Strategy Manager and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE - Councillor Kelley, Mr. N. Brewster, Mr. J. Gibson and Mr. T.Stahl representing Darlington for Culture and Mrs. D. Dodds, member of the public.

EE8. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS – Councillor Long declared a non-prejudicial interest in Minute EE11 below due to her being a Board Member of Theatre Hullabaloo and Councillor Harman declared a non-prejudicial interest due to him being a member of Darlington for Culture.

EE9. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd June, 2011.

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

EE10. CHANGING ROLE OF SCRUTINY- (1) How Can Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee be Involved - The Director of Place advised Members that there had been no significant changes to the Medium Term Financial Plan position, projects within the Transformation Programme relevant to this Scrutiny Committee or Government Policy changes which would impact on the outcomes for people and place since the last meeting this Scrutiny

RESOLVED – That the current situation be noted.

(2) Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee Work Programme –Discussion ensued on the proposed work programme and possible review topics for this Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2011/12. In considering areas to include on the work programme, Members were reminded of the need to take into account the reduced resources available within the Authority and the need to ensure that any work undertaken had demonstrable outcomes and contributed to the work of the Council and its strategic aims and objectives.

Discussion ensued on key issues which could form this Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme and in doing so Members were advised that the MTFP would be developed over the Autumn period and that Scrutiny could look at the details of the significant decisions that had to be made at that time.

RESOLVED – That it be recommended to the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group that the following areas of work be included on the work programme of this Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of this Municipal Year 2011/12 :-

- (a) Civil Parking Enforcement;
- (b) Economic Strategy;
- (c) Local Development Framework;
- (d) Transformation Agenda (involvement in major options if the need arises);

(3) Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee Review Groups and Task and Finish Reviews – Members discussed, taking into consideration the comments of the Director of Place and with regard to the challenges ahead, key areas of work for this Scrutiny Committee to focus on. It was agreed that all Members of this Scrutiny will be invited to each Review Group meeting and that the Review Groups and Task and Finish Groups will be primarily Member led.

RESOLVED – That the suggested areas of Review to be submitted to the Monitoring and Co-Ordination Group for approval are 20's Plenty Campaign and The Arts.

EE11. ARTS ENQUIRY GROUP – The Director of Place confirmed the current position with regard to provision of the Arts and Culture in Darlington as outlined in the document 'Creative Darlington – Investing in a Creative Community' which had been drafted by the Darlington Arts Enquiry Group.

The Director advised that four options were being considered in relation to buildings although one option did not meet all requirements for Darlington and that there was no finance available for provision of the Arts in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Reference was made to the three key requirements to deliver the arts in Darlington which were creation of an Arts Hub, provision of a children and young people's theatre and a strategic function to ensure that the arts programme is delivered.

Members of Darlington for Culture, a volunteer-based organisation, attended the meeting and outlined its proposals for operating Darlington Arts Centre and the organisation were advised to complete its business plan as a matter of urgency.

RESOLVED – (a) That this Scrutiny Committee notes and applauds the variety and scope of the consultation process undertaken.

(b) That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the LSP Enquiry Group for its work and considers that the interest of all sectors of the community in continued cultural provision is demonstrated.

(c) That this Scrutiny Committee considers that the establishment of Darlington for Culture and its voluntary work so far is a positive and welcome contribution to cultural provision in Darlington.

(d) That this Scrutiny Committee notes the key role which arts and culture play in economy and regeneration and the necessity of the changing role of the Council from being an arts provider to an arts enabler.

(e) This Scrutiny Committee endorses the approach embodied in the document 'Creative Darlington' in particular :-

- i. Arts and culture as drivers of the One Darlington Perfectly Placed agenda;
- ii. Encourage inward investment and regeneration as well as individual fulfilment and social inclusion whilst emphasising the importance of creative industries to the local economy;
- iii. Endorses the Diversity and Excellence model as outlined in the report;
- iv. Encourages the establishment of an Arts Forum;
- v. Continued funding of a 'strategic function';
- vi. Provision of an Arts Hub in preference to a polycentric model due to the value of cross fertilisation of different art forms offered by such a model; and
- vii. The need and desire to work with other partners, sectors and other local authorities.

(f) That this Scrutiny Committee agreed the following with regard to the future of the Arts Centre :-

- i. The need for greater clarity regarding short, medium and long term solutions;
- ii. An open approach to the consideration of provision of cultural services with a preference for democratic governance models such as co-operatives; community benefit companies and community interest companies;
- iii. Continued sense of responsibility for present partners, tenants, users and hirers in recognition of their contribution; and
- iv. Establishment of a Task and Finish Group to oversee future developments.