
OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Environment Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-
 - (a) **Consultation on Planning Applications for the Expansion of Durham Tees Valley Airport and Development of a Business Park** - We gave consideration to a 'call-in' from Joint Strategy Committee held on 18th March, 2005 in relation to consultations undertaken on two planning applications for the expansion of Durham Tees Valley Airport and to develop a Business Park. After our concerns were addressed by both our Officers and Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit we concluded that we understood the decision of the Joint Strategy Committee and that local issues arising from that decision would be dealt with at the relevant Darlington Borough Council Committees.
 - (b) **Annual Report** – We compiled our Annual Scrutiny Report which shows that Environment Scrutiny has worked hard to ensure that the Scrutiny Process is developed using good practice and harnesses the experience and interests of all Members to the benefit of the Town's population in the drive to improve services and look after our environment for everyone.
 - (c) **Work Programme 2004/05** – We have given consideration to the Work Programme of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2004/05 and in doing so examined Cabinet's Forward Plan for particular areas of interest and concern.
 - (d) **Darlington's Bus Stop Network – Improvements Programme** - .An overview of Darlington's bus stop network improvements programme informed us that to increase bus patronage certain objectives had to be met. These included the provision of CCTV and lighting at 24 rural and 10 urban shelters, raised kerbs to improve access to buses for the elderly and infirm, new bus stop flags providing information on the services operating from each stop, improved information provision and proper maintenance and cleaning of all stops.
 - (e) **Environmental Services Service** – The Environmental Services Plan for 2005/06 set out the actions needed to deliver improvement and milestones to deliver the actions that the Division would address during 2005/06. The Plan also illustrated the links with the Departmental Service Plan and corporate objectives.
 - (f) **Climate Change** - We endorsed the Climate Change Strategy for Darlington which was being developed by the Darlington Local Strategic Partnership. The Strategy is due to be launched in September 2005 and will address both combating climate change and adapting to and will also be supported by an Action Plan. The Local Strategic Partnership is also supporting the development of a Tees Valley Strategy and this Council will contribute to funding a fixed term post to develop the regional strategy

and to provide technical expertise to the Tees Valley authorities in development their own strategies. We will continue to monitor its progress.

- (g) **Policy Review – Review of Progress on Policy Review Items – Conservation Review Group** – Following the decision of Cabinet on the findings of the Conservation Review Group we gave consideration to an Action Plan which had been drawn up. Some work has already begun on various tasks and we will continue to monitor the progress of the Plan.
- (h) **Policy Review – Review Items Final Report Back -**
 - (i) **Derelict Land Sites Task and Finish Review Group** – Consideration was given to the findings of a Derelict Land Sites Task and Finish Review Group established to investigate Members concerns regarding derelict and vacant sites with a view to identifying possible solutions to problems. Environment Scrutiny Committee agreed that a full Review be undertaken during 2005/06 in order to take forward and build on the initial findings of the Task and Finish Review Group.
 - (ii) **Works of Art Purchasing Task and Finish Review Group** – The Works of Arts Purchasing Task and Finish Review Group was established to investigate financing the purchase of works of art for future generations, with particular attention to obtaining a budget and devising a purchasing policy. Following its investigations the Group concluded that no further action be taken until a proposed audit of the Council’s art collection has been undertaken.
 - (iii) **Tourism Review Group** – Environment Scrutiny’s main Review for the 2004/05 Municipal Year has been Tourism and was established to investigate how the tourism strategy could be improved in the light of regeneration. The Group attended site visits to Chesterfield and neighbouring Tourist Information Centres during its investigations and the resulting Action Plan and final conclusions of the Group have been considered by Cabinet.

**Councillor Stella Robson
Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee**