
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) **Trends in New Business Numbers in Darlington Compared with Neighbouring Authorities** - We received a presentation from Business Link Tees Valley on the trends in new business numbers in Darlington compared with neighbouring authorities. The presentation provided headline figures for the number of business registrations and business starts per 10,000 population over the last ten years in the five Tees Valley Boroughs, the Tees Valley, the North East Region and the United Kingdom. Representatives from other organisations who are involved with providing advice and assistance to new and small businesses in Darlington were also in attendance to answer Members' questions. A further meeting is to be arranged.
 - (b) **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.
 - (c) **Development and Regeneration Service Plan** – We received a brief overview of Performance Plus using Development and Environment Service Plan as the example Service Plan to be monitored. Members agreed to hold a workshop to follow up this technique.
 - (d) **Sport and Recreation Strategy Progress Report** – We received a progress report in relation to the Improvement Action Plan for the Sport and Recreation Strategy Action Plan adopted by this Council in December 2002. The original Improvement Action Plan contained 48 Action Points however this was reduced to 38 Action Points following revision to align the actions to the Community Strategy and Regional and National Sport England priority policy areas.
 - (e) **Policy Review – Review of Progress on Policy Review Items** –
 - (i) **Corridors of Certainty – North Road and Yarm Road** – The Director of Development and Environment's representatives answered Members' questions in relation to the progress on the Corridors of Certainty.
 - (ii) **Tourism Review Group** – We are making good progress on our review and arrangements are currently in hand for several site visits to neighbouring Tourism Information Centres during February.

- (iii) **Conservation Review Group** – Councillors Hartley and Lewis attended the English Historic Towns Forum Conference in Lincoln during October 2004 as part of the Conservation Review Group investigations and their findings were reported to Members.

- (f) **Best Value – Review of Culture -**
 - (i) **Update of Cultural Strategy** – The Local Cultural Strategy Moving Up was approved by Council on 5th December, 2002 and we were advised of some of the cross authority achievements associated with the philosophy of the Strategy and the Moving Up Action Plan. Although work still has to commence on some of the proposals a considerable amount of headway has been made.

 - (ii) **Best Value Review of Culture – Progress** – Environment Scrutiny were also informed of progress in relation to the Improvement Action Plan which was an outcome of the Best Value Review of Culture completed in February 2003. There were currently 18 Action Points each with at least one milestone linked into it. To date, work has commenced on all of the Action Points with many being completed and major achievements being reached on the remaining items.

Councillor Stella Robson
Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee