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OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Environment Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-
  - (a) **Work Programme 2005/06** – We have given consideration to the Work Programme of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2005/06 and in doing so examined Cabinet’s Forward Plan for particular areas of interest and concern.
  - (b) **Annual Tour of Countryside Wild Spaces** – Following the success of last years tour of Countryside Wild Spaces Environment Scrutiny are now to hold annual tours and the date of 18th July, 2005 was agreed. We hope to visit Firthmoor, Brinkburn, Skerningham Community Woodland where additional tree planting has taken shape, Cocker Beck to learn of future proposals and finally, the Whinnies, Middleton St. George. All Members of the Council were invited to attend.
  - (c) **Leisure and Arts Service Plan 2005/06** – Consideration was given to the Leisure and Arts Service Plan 2005/06 which set out the improvement priorities to be addressed during 2005/06 and illustrated the links between the Division’s work and the bigger picture of departmental, corporate and community objectives. We agreed to monitor progress against the targets set out in the Plan.
  - (d) **Parks and Open Spaces Draft Strategy Action Plan Update** – As the existing draft Strategy for Parks and Opens spaces was to be replaced with an Open Space Strategy following Best Practice Guidance and Planning Policy Guidance, Environment Scrutiny were given the opportunity to monitor the progress of the Action Plan and, as such, we received a progress report.
  - (e) **Policy Review – Review of Progress on Policy Review Items** –
    - (i) **Gulley Cleaning Task and Finish Review Group** – The Group has now completed its investigations and in the process of compiling its Final Report, which we hope to receive at our next meeting, scheduled for 1st September, 2005.
    - (ii) **Business Start Ups Review Group - Progress Report - Neglected Land Review Group** - Consideration was given to the findings of a Business Start-ups Task and Finish Review Group established to investigate business support given to new business within the Borough. 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.

- (iii) **Neglected Land Review Group** – Consideration was given to the Terms of Reference for the newly established Neglected Land Review Group and we hope to hold our first meeting of the Review Group prior to the Summer Recess.
  - (f) **Executive Call-In – Call-in items relating to Key Decisions of the Executive – Darlington Concessionary Fare Travel Schemes 2005/06** — We gave consideration to a ‘call-in’ from the Cabinet Meeting held on 7th June in relation to the eligibility criteria for the taxi voucher scheme. After both Officers and Councillor Wallis, Cabinet Member with Highways and Transport Portfolio addressed our concerns we gave our support to the proposal.
  - (g) **Darlington’s Second Local Transport Plan** – We examined the Provisional Second Darlington Local Transport Plan covering the period April 2006 to March 2011 which is based on an analysis of travel and transport in Darlington, the Darlington Community Strategy, consultations and best practice. It also reflects prescriptive Guidance from the Department for Transport about the content and transport solutions to be included in Local Transport Plans. It is a strategy that would improve travel in Darlington for all types of trip, by all sections of the Community and by all modes – a strategy to improve the accessibility of Darlington people to jobs, education, shopping, leisure services and health.
2. I also attended a Town on the Move Seminar in Peterborough at which Vernon Brooke gave information and feedback on a study tour that had been undertaken in four German cities. I was informed that any changes can take up to 20 years to get an effect and that a sustained effort had to be made to make the changes but that it could be done.

**The Mayor, Councillor Stella Robson  
Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee**