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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. We continually add to our Work Programme and monitor ongoing items.
  - (b) **Dolphin Centre Refurbishment Update** – In December 2004, the proposal to refurbish the Dolphin Centre was approved and Environment Scrutiny Committee have been advised of the enabling works to date, the programme of works and improvements to the Centre to be undertaken during the period 13th March, 2006 to 4th December, 2006 and the methods of ensuring minimal disruption to all users of the Centre which includes the provision of a hotline telephone number and the development of a communication strategy.
  - (c) **Street Scene** – We gave consideration to a report summarising the findings of the Street Scene Review, which was undertaken as a pilot project within the Leading Edge Change Programme, to improve street services for residents, generate efficiencies, adopt good practice and modernise services focusing on customer needs. We were advised of the objectives of the design project, the key elements of the project, main outcomes of the review; and design proposals for five key changes to service delivery. The proposed changes to service delivery included area based working; changes to organisational structure and culture; strengthening of community engagement; identification of efficiency predictions of £1.5m cumulatively over the next four years; and four key issues of operational changes which would provide a more efficient and cost effective service. It is envisaged that the area based service delivery model would be launched during July 2006.
  - (d) **Darlington Concessionary Fare Travel Scheme 2006/07** – We were provided with details of the Concessionary bus travel to be provided for people aged over 60 and people with travel disabilities in Darlington from 1st April, 2006. We were advised that following negotiations with bus operations Officers had secured additions to the national scheme which included free bus travel all day within the Borough and free bus travel all day between Darlington and Bishop Auckland General Hospital on Bus Services 1 and 1b. It is hoped that bus operators will see the advantages of these additions and may give consideration to further amendments during 2007/08.

**(e) Policy Review – Review of Progress on Policy Review Items –**

- (i) Neglected Land Review Group** – We continue to make progress on the Neglected Land Review Group and have had a further meeting that enlightened the Group as to the various powers available to the Council, which could be used when dealing with problem land together with environmental issues surrounding the sites.
- (ii) Tourism Review Group – Action Plan** – Following completion of the Tourism Review Group during 2005 we were advised of the progress made on the Tourism Review Action Plan. Many activities have been undertaken and great progress has been made by the Tourism Team on the areas raised within the Action Plan.
- (iii) Signing and Street Furniture** – Following concerns expressed by Members that recommendations of our Task and Finish Group on Street Furniture and Signage had not been taken on board we were advised of work that had been undertaken as a result of our Review through projects and programmes. We were also advised that the concept design for the Street Scene project was looking to expand the street care type of approach to deal efficiently with local cleansing and street maintenance issues throughout the Borough.

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