
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) **Forward Plan** – We received a presentation on the revised Forward Plan, which is now also available on the Council’s Intranet.
 - (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) **Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy** – A draft of the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy aimed at providing an approach to tackling deprivation in the eleven most disadvantaged wards together with the key actions that come within the remit of Environment Scrutiny has been considered by the Committee and we look forward to monitoring the progress on the Action Plan in due course.
 - (d) **Environmental Services Service Plan** – We received the Environmental Services Service Plan 2004/05, which included key service actions and objectives that support the Community Strategy vision. Environmental Services consists of Refuse, Recycling, Street Cleaning, Horticulture, Parks and Green Spaces, Building Cleaning, Transport Services and the Uniformed Warden Service.
 - (e) **Consultancy Service Plan** – We were advised of the progress on the implementation of the 2004/05 service plan for Development and Environment’s Consultancy Division which includes all highways management/maintenance functions and the Building Design Service. The mid-year position on the implementation of the Consultancy Division Service Plan is very positive and it is considered that ongoing work during the remainder of the year will ensure that the plan is achieved.
 - (f) **Darlington’s Cycle Network** – We were pleased to be given an overview of the plans for the further expansion of Darlington’s network of cycle and pedestrian paths together with an update on the current position with regard to extending access for pedestrians and cyclists alongside the River Skerne from Albert Road to John Street. In order to complete the Harrowgate Hill to Town Centre route the Council is in correspondence with three separate landowners from which agreement is necessary to gain access to the River Skerne corridor.
 - (g) **Annual tour of Sites 2004** – The Committee has undertaken its annual tour of sites together with Planning Committee to recently completed or nearing completion approved planning applications. The choice of sites took in a range of different

development types across the Borough and reflected typical applications, which are considered by the Local Planning Authority and highlighted various issues for us to consider at each locations.

- (h) **Countryside Wild Spaces - Tour of Sites** – We also undertook site visits to Drinkfield Marsh, Brinkburn Pond, Geneva Woods and Firthmoor from which we were able to see a selection of Countryside Projects that are ongoing at present and the main issues that these initiatives are attempting to address. The visits were highly successful and may become an annual visit in future.

- (i) **Policy Review – Responses of the Executive to Reports of the Scrutiny Committee – Conservation Review Group** – Cabinet considered the Final Report of the Conservation Review Group in which our recommendations were noted and approval given for the drawing-up of an Action Plan. It was recognised that there were problems caused by the loss of key staff in the Conservation Section and this is to be investigated.

Councillor Stella Robson
Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee