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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 2006/07** – 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) **Draft 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) **Drafts Events Strategy** - The Draft Events Strategy supports the Council’s aims and objectives and has been developed with stakeholders from both private and public sector organisations. With that in mind we gave consideration to the proposed Events Strategy for Darlington the purpose of which is to determine the Council’s role in delivering events for Darlington and assist with the decision-making process regarding priorities, programming and co-ordination.
  - (d) **Arts Centre Refurbishment** – We were advised of the confirmed funding received so far for the refurbishment works to the Arts Centre and of the two decisions that were due to be announced during Spring 2006. The refurbishment works are to be undertaken in three phases and a programme of works is being developed with the successful contractor.
  - (e) **Climate Change – Draft Strategy** - We endorsed the Climate Change Strategy for Darlington which has been developed by the Darlington Local Strategic Partnership. The Darlington Declaration was launched in November 2005 and symbolised Darlington’s commitment to tackling the effects of Climate Change. The Strategy gives an overview of the causes effects and responses to Climate Change and the next step is to develop an action plan for tackling climate change in Darlington which is to be undertaken in conjunction with the Tees Valley Climate Change Officer.

- (f) **A Town on the Move** – We received a progress report on the delivery of the Darlington – A Town on the Move project, funded by the Department for Transport through the National Sustainable Travel Demonstration town initiative. The funding of £3.24 million for revenue expenditure by the Department for Transport is released quarterly, in arrears, to support the delivery of a range of initiatives promoting the greater use of sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing.
- (g) **‘Let’s Get Cracking’** – The ‘Let’s Get Cracking’ project was initiated whereby an additional £2.5m of highway maintenance funding was made available through Prudential Borrowing to carry out a wide range of remedial/improvement works over a relative short period of time. Residents of the Borough identified where they thought repairs were needed by way of a public consultation exercise that was carried out during August/September 2005. The programme of schemes will be carried out in a phased way in order to maximise benefit to residents with several schemes being undertaken simultaneously. We will monitor the progress of ‘Lets Get Cracking’ over its duration.
- (h) **Policy Review – Review of Progress on Policy Review Items - Conservation Review Group – Action Plan** - Following completion of the Conservation Review Group during 2005 we were advised of the progress made on the Conservation Review Action Plan. Many activities have been undertaken and great progress has been made by the Conservation Team on the areas raised within the Action Plan.
- (i) **Policy Review – Review of Progress on Policy Review Items – Neglected Land Review Group** – Environment Scrutiny’s main Review for the 2005/06 Municipal Year has been Neglected Land and was established to investigate Members’ concerns regarding derelict vacant sites and to identify possible solutions to various problems. The Group has now completed its investigations and forwarded its findings to Cabinet for approval.

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