
OVERVIEW OF ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-
 - (a) **Work Programme 2007/08** – We have given consideration to the Work Programme of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2007/08 and in doing so examined Cabinet’s Forward Plan for particular areas of interest and concern. We will continually add to our Work Programme and monitor ongoing items.
 - (b) **Darlington Planning Forum** - To enable Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee to fulfil its monitoring role of the Development Control Best Value Review we received the Minutes of the meeting of the Darlington Planning Forum held on 7th February, 2008r. As Chair of Economy and Environment Scrutiny I also attended the meeting and was encouraged by the comments received from the Forum Members.
 - (c) **Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor** - Mr. John Johnson, Projects Manager, attended Scrutiny Committee and gave a presentation to Committee on the progress to date of the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor works. We were advised that the project was in week 41 of the 69 week programme of works and it was still on schedule for completion for Summer 2008. The Committee looks forward to the expected report on the outcome of the work of the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor.
 - (a) **Service Plan Performance 3rd Quarter 2007/08** - We gave consideration to Consultancy and Development and Regeneration service plans for which we have responsibility and we will continue to monitor these at regular intervals.
 - (d) **Core Strategy Workshop** – We were advised of the success of the Core Strategy Workshop which was held on 15th February, 2008 and gave consideration to the Core Options and Issues Strategy. The workshop was one of the most interesting I have attended and was very well attended by Members.
 - (e) **Waste Management** – Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee were advised of the progress made with regard to the procurement for a Waste Treatment and Disposal Contract and the Joint Waste Management Strategy for Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton on Tees Borough Councils. A significant amount of work took place last year around the waste management service, with Stonegrave Aggregates being awarded the new contract from April 2009. A consultation exercise will be undertaken with residents of the Borough on any potential changes to refuse/recycling collections which will tie into the new

treatment/disposal contract.

- (f) **Darlington's Countryside and Green Infrastructure Strategy Main Issues** – Scrutiny were given details of the main issues the new Countryside and Green Infrastructure would be dealing with via a strategy covering the next ten years. The plan will provide action on biodiversity and access to quality countryside which has accelerated in recent years. The Strategy also provided the background and reasoning as to why the protection and enhancement of the countryside should be fully integrated into other services and properly resourced to ensure that maximum advantage is taken of opportunities when they arise.
- (g) **Groundwork** - We received a report on the work that Groundwork West Durham and Darlington have undertaken in Darlington in partnership with this Council and a presentation from Kate Culverhouse, Executive Director giving further detail on the work that has been undertaken including Street Champions; the Pride Initiative which works with the eleven Neighbourhood Renewal Wards to encourage community involvement in local issues; the Young Caretakers Programme aimed at engaging and supporting young people in their neighbourhood; Motiv8 which since November 2006 has been working with 6 Year 10 pupils from Eastbourne School on an alternative curriculum programme; and numerous works around the parks, play areas and open spaces within the Borough. We were very impressed with all that has been achieved and pleased to see that Groundwork have a full agenda for future works.
- (h) **Improvements to Parks, Play Areas and Open Spaces** – Scrutiny were also advised of the progress in delivering a number of capital projects to improve parks, play areas and open spaces through the Local Area Agreement. A range of projects across the Borough have been delivered or are about to be delivered from total capital funding of £1,410,000. The Council, together with Groundwork West Durham and Darlington and the community have also been successful in attracting other external funding for a number of projects. Although funding through the Local Area Agreement comes to an end in March 2008 the schemes identified through that programme will be completed.
- (i) **Policy Review – Planning Function – Decision Performance** – We have concluded the first stage of our review and have decided to suspend the Group and reconvene once Roy Merritt, Development Manager, is in post and Trevor Roberts Associates have begun their work. However the Group concluded that areas which needed further investigation were staffing, delegation, e-processing of applications and Committee procedures.
- (j) **Policy Review – Climate Change** – Scrutiny were delighted that the Climate Change Review was well received by Cabinet and we look forward to monitoring the Action Plan.

2. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended the following meetings:-

- Various briefings with Officers.

- Governance Group
- Monitoring and Co-ordination Group

Councillor Stella Robson
Chair of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee