
PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT 2006/07

1. I take great pleasure in presenting the Annual Report of the Public Protection and Community Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to Council on behalf of that Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the officers, in particular Bill Westland, Assistant Director Public Protection who is the lead Officer on this Scrutiny Committee and Allison Carling the Democratic Support Officer, all the Members of this Scrutiny Committee, and in particular those Members who participated in the Reviews. I would also like to thank Councillor Harker, the Cabinet Member with the Consumer and Environmental Services portfolio for his continued support.
2. With regard to a Policy Review Group for 2006/07, this Scrutiny Committee undertook its major Review in relation to Food Safety and their final report with recommendations was presented to this Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 27th March, 2007. Task and Finish Review Groups included Closed Circuit Television in Bus Shelters and the Uniformed Warden Service. Further details on the remit and outcome of these Reviews are detailed below. We have also continued to monitor progress on past Reviews including the Dogs Review and the Joint Review on Gully Cleaning.
3. We continue to monitor progress with the Household Waste Recycling Centre, which has become the biggest recycling site in the North-East. The site was redesigned, enlarged and improved, with financial assistance from DEFRA (£730,000) in late 2005, reopening under the new title Household Waste Recycling Centre, in mid December 2005. There has been a marked improvement in recycling performance and increased the total of recycling of biodegradable materials and is now performing at the same level as the best sites in the region and the country, however the site is still being monitored and reviewed to assess what further improvements can be made to include recycling further materials.
4. The current landfill-based waste disposal contract is due to come to an end on 31st January, 2008 so the Council is making preparations to procure a new contact, which will focus on sustainable waste management and landfill diversion. We held a Special Meeting on 7th March, 2006 to give our views on the Environmental Options Assessment for Municipal Waste in Darlington and will continue to be involved in the procurement process over the next Municipal Year. Members of this Scrutiny also visited the sites of three major waste contractors operating in the region to see how they operate and to receive more information on incineration with energy recovery and digester processes, thus avoiding landfill and gaining value from waste.

5. We have seen great changes in the way that Street Scene Services have been delivered in Darlington, empowering local communities to also take responsibility for the quality of their environment. Street Scene is an area based approach of which there are now five areas, with teams of 24-30 operatives led by a Team Leader and Co-ordinator. These teams work generically, seven days a week and aim to engage with the community in assisting them in delivering the services and develop a new culture and way of working. Efficiencies were anticipated of £130,00 for 2006/07 increasing to £500,000 by 2008/09, and those efficiency savings continue to be on target. It has been acknowledged that there were ‘teething problems’ however, services have now improved and this is reflected in the Annual Community Survey which showed how ‘satisfied’ residents were with streets, refuse collection, upkeep and appearance of residential areas, parks and opens spaces. The coming months will see a continuation of community engagement; a programme of leaf clearance; improvement programme for the winter months; planning for improvements in grounds maintenance service; planning for new refuse collection rounds; winter maintenance; low level highway maintenance; and mobile working. There are also future opportunities which include funding via Local Area Agreement; a scheme for ‘Young Caretakers’; links with Anti Social Behaviour and Environmental Crime teams; new Performance Management Framework; and the Crime Disorder Reduction Partnership. This Scrutiny Committee will continue to follow with great interest the progress of Street Scene other the forthcoming Municipal Year.
6. We are keen to monitor the progress of the Community Partnerships located in Darlington’s eleven priority wards, their working practices, attendance at Partnership meetings and how the Partnerships involve their partners i.e. local businesses, schools, churches, Sure Start, Connexions, the Police, the Primary Care Trust and Council departments. It has been proposed that we undertake a full Review of Community Partnerships during the Municipal Year 2007/08.
7. On 19th February, 2007, Scrutiny Members undertook a visit to West Cemetery, following a presentation to Scrutiny on 23rd January, 2007, with particular emphasis on headstone safety, pollution arising from the operation of the Crematorium and the provision of burial space.
8. As part of our monitoring role we have continued to examine the Service Plans under the control of the Public Protection and Community Partnerships Scrutiny Committee using *Performance Plus* which has enabled us to undertake better performance management. A Task and Finish Review Group was established to enable this Scrutiny to begin preparation for the forthcoming Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in March, 2008, and discuss how we can continue to identify any areas of concern with the Public Protection and Community Partnerships Service Plans within our control.
9. Other areas of work undertaken by this Scrutiny during the Municipal Year 2006/07 are detailed at **Appendix 1**.
10. Our main Review for this Municipal Year has been on Food Safety, particularly in relation to food standards and food hygiene. The Group have met on various occasions, met with officers in the various service areas and undertaken a consultation exercise with the various agencies working with this Council to provide a food safety service. The Group were

particular interested in the development of a Food Hygiene Award Scheme and examined ways of making available on the website both the details of star ratings of all premises along with the details of the standard of hygiene found during route inspections. The final report of the Group was presented to this Scrutiny meeting with their recommendations.

11. A Task and Finish Review Group was established and Councillors B. Jones and G. Lee investigated various issue in relation to CCTV in bus shelters and the bid awarded to the Council for illuminating, upgrading and improving security and passenger facilities at all the rural bus shelters in the Borough. Various meetings with officers have taken place over the months and Members have visited a number of shelters to examine the quality of pictures produced since the system went “live” on 17th October, 2006. The final report of the Group was presented to this Scrutiny meeting of 27th March, 2007 with their recommendations.
12. A Task and Finish Review Group was undertaken by Councillors B. Jones and The Mayor to examine the Warden Service and to address some initial concerns addressed by our Scrutiny Members. During their investigations, the Group have interviewed the Anti-Social Behaviour Manager and two Anti-social Behaviour Officers and accompanied the Wardens on their evening patrol on Friday, 29th September, 2006. The final report was presented to this Scrutiny Committee on 23rd January, 2007 and the Group concluded that the Warden Service is addressing the initial concerns of the Members, particularly with regard to recruitment and believe that Senior staff members are committed to their roles and provide good leadership while being innovative in their approach to improving the role and effectiveness of the wardens.

**Councillor Doris Jones
Chair of Public Protection and
Community Partnerships Scrutiny Committee**