
OVERVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-
 - (a) **Work Programme** – We continue to update and add to our Work Programme continuing to focus on the changes to the remit and discussed review topics for the Municipal Year 2007/08. We also examined Cabinet’s Forward Plan for particular areas of interest and concern to be included within our Work Programme and also further areas for undertaking Task and Finish Review Group.
 - (b) **Review /Task and Finish Groups** – We have agreed that our next major Review will be on Street Scene and Councillors B. Jones, Maddison, Newall, J. Lyonette, Ruck and York along with myself, have been nominated to serve on this Review. Monitoring and Co-ordination Group have approved this Review and it is intended that the first meeting be called to set the terms of reference for the Review.
 - (c) **Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy** – We gave consideration to and approved the adoption of the new Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy for 2008/11. Following the implementation of the Housing Act 2004 and the changes it brought about, particular giving more flexibility on how we provide financial assistance, there was a need for a review of the Strategy. This Council has agreed to offer the new regional loans produce in Darlington which should be available in 2009
 - (d) **Reward and Recognition Scheme** – We have been giving our views on the implementation of a Reward and Recognition Scheme, approved by Cabinet in June 2007 and developed for Council tenants and leaseholders. The main role of the scheme, developed in close consultation with the Tenants Board, is to reward and recognise good behaviour and there will be a number of prize competitions and other rewards for tenants who pay by direct debit and a good neighbour category. Offering reward for good tenants, not just to punish the miscreants. Most of the rewards are for existing tenants and it is also important to offer something to new tenants. It is proposed that new tenants will be able to apply for one hour of time from either the Care and Repair or CABLE handy person service. Also, it is I proposed to enter all Leaseholders with clear service charge accounts at the end of the financial year into a draw with a prize of £200.
 - (e) **Talking Together Events** – We received an update on the Talking Together events that have been held around the Borough as part of the Council’s community engagement initiative and gave our comments and suggestions for future events. Over

400 adults have attended these events in total and have proved a success in consulting with the residents, particular at those events that had a key focus. The next round of Talking Together is due to commence and the key focus for these events will be consultation on Waste Management arrangements.

- (f) **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 Nigel Potter, Darlington Programme Manager 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.

Councillor Doris Jones
Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee