
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) **Local Development Framework – Update on the New Development Plan System -**
We received a presentation outlining the stage the Council had reached on the Local Development Framework. The Local Development Scheme is the project plan for the production of the Local Development Framework and is prepared by each individual authority and agreed with the Government Office. We also considered the Statement of Community Involvement which was a document produced to explain to people how they can have their say on both the new planning documents that will be prepared and planning applications, including the case of significant planning applications at pre-application stage.
 - (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) **Dolphin Centre Refurbishment** – We received a presentation on the proposed refurbishment of the Dolphin Centre which was now 25 years old and needed bringing up to date. The feasibility had been completed and the next stage was the scoping report. We look forward to further monitoring progress reports in the future.
 - (d) **Parks and Green Spaces Strategy** – We were advised on the progress, production and implementation of Darlington Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and of a new requirement to produce an open land supplementary planning document to fit into the new Local Development Framework which was required to ensure that the Council could justify any planning decisions for applications on existing areas of open space. The Strategy is therefore required to be an all embracing Open Space Strategy which is to tie in with the Local Development Framework and completion by February 2006.
 - (e) **Policy Review – Review of Progress on Policy Review Items** –
 - (i) **Tourism Review Group** – We are making good progress on our review and have undertaken Site Visits to Tourist Information Centres in Chesterfield, a town comparable to Darlington in size and population, and also to Richmond, Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland and Thirsk during February and March.
 - (ii) **Derelict Land Sites Task and Finish Review Group** – Environment Scrutiny have established a Review Group to define dereliction and gain knowledge of any legal powers available to both the Council and the public to tidy up such

sites. The Review is to be restricted to Wards defined as ‘deprived’ and several meetings have already taken place. Good progress has already been made and we look forward to the findings of the Group.

- (iii) **Gulley Cleaning Task and Finish Review Group** – We were asked by Public Protection and Community Partnerships Committee to forward two nominees to participate in a Joint Task and Finish Review to examine gulley cleaning in the Borough. Public Protection and Community Partnerships Scrutiny Committee will take the Lead for this Review and we look forward to working with them on this Review.

- (f) **Review of Pricing Policy – Leisure and Arts** – We were asked for our views on the Pricing Policy for Leisure and Arts with particular emphasis on Leisure Saver and the sections of the Community whose needs were highlighted in the draft Social Inclusion Strategy.

- (g) **Town Centre Pedestrian Heart – Traffic Regulation Order 2005** – We gave consideration to a ‘call-in’ from the Cabinet Meeting held on 15th February in relation to the decision to allow cycles within the Town Centre Pedestrian Heart. After our concerns were addressed by both Officers and Durham Constabulary we gave our support to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order.

- (h) **Business Start-Ups in Darlington Task and Finish Review Group** – A new Task and Finish Review has been established to investigate business start-ups in Darlington and will be lead by Councillor Patrick Heaney. We look forward to hearing the progress of this Review in the new Municipal Year.

- (i) **Town on the Move Summit** – Several Members of the Committee took a lively part in the Town on the Move Event from 15th to 17th March, 2005. The event involved representatives from the Darlington Assembly through to national conference level speakers, as Darlington shared with Peterborough and Worcester, the accolade of being one of the three authorities nationally to be selected for this exciting initiative.

Councillor Stella Robson
Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee