
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 2010/11** – The Committee considered the Work Programme for the 2010/11 Municipal Year and we will continue to update and add to our Work Programme throughout the year. 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 Groups.

In relation to the Assisted Refuse Collection and the Weed Killing Task and Finish Review Groups, meetings have taken place with Officers and we have made a number of recommendations and it is proposed that the final reports of both these Task and Finish Review Groups will be submitted to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee and I will inform you of the outcome in my next update to Council.

- (b) **Albert Hill Fire** – We received an informative presentation from a number of representatives from the Local Authority, Environment Agency, Fire Services and the Health and Safety Executive on the recent fire that occurred at Albert Hill on 8th July, 2010. The representatives from each of the agencies gave us an overview on their roles and responsibilities in the incident and the lessons that they had learned.

As Chair I thought this was a very positive presentation and many members have congratulated Scrutiny for looking into this incident.

- (c) **Annual Report to Tenants** – Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to comment on the draft Annual Report that will be sent to all tenants in November, 2010, following the new regulator that came into force from 1st April, 2010. We were informed that the Tenant Services Authority who is the new regulator for all social housing providers in England have produced a list of six national standards that apply to all providers whether they are local authority, housing association or other form of provider that describe the outcomes that they want to see achieved as well as some specific expectations that they expect all providers to comply with, including involving tenants in the design of their services and delivering on any promises made.
- (d) **Performance Report 4th Quarter** - As part of our monitoring role we are responsible for scrutinising the five service plans which fall within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee those being, Building Services, Connecting with Communities, Housing, Housing Benefits and Safer Communities. Along with the service plans this Scrutiny also has the responsibility of scrutinising elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy : One Darlington : Perfectly Placed and the Local Area Agreement so we can note the overall performance, reasons for underperformance and undertake Task and

Finish Reviews into areas of service where Committee feel it is necessary to examine more closely. We were pleased to note that the overall aggregated target for the five service plans were on target and the individual service plans were all on or above target apart from Building Services.

- (e) **Safer Darlington Theme Group** – Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to be informed of the outcome of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Safer Theme Group meeting held on 17th June, 2010. Topics given consideration included the Basic Command Unit funding and the Safer and Stronger Communities funding, the performance of the Community Safety Partnership, the joint strategic intelligence assessment, to which Darlington is to have their own report this year rather than being in a Durham wide document; problem solving training, young peoples survey, relocation of the substance misuse treatment centre and operation relentless. Particular reference was also made in relation to Michael Pearson who is the new Fire Station Manager.

Councillor Doris Jones
Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee