
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 2009/10** – We have considered our Work Programme for the 2009/10 Municipal Year and 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.
 - (b) **3rd Quarter Performance Report 2009/10** – We are responsible for the monitoring of four service plans i.e. Highways, Environmental Services (Street Scene), Regeneration and Culture. Along with the service plans this Scrutiny also has responsibility to scrutinise elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy : One Darlington : Perfectly Placed and the Local Area Agreement to note overall performance, reasons for underperformance and to undertake Task and Finish Reviews into areas of service where Committee feel it is necessary to examine more closely.
 - (c) **Economic Downturn Update** – Scrutiny were concerned to receive a report which highlighted the latest economic downturn intelligence, assessed the impact of the effects being felt in Darlington and reviewed the initiatives underway, or proposed, in response to the current situation. We were given a summary of the Audit Commission National Report on how Councils are responding to the recession and provided with several indicators which measured Darlington’s position in relation to the current economic climate. We were pleased to learn of proposed initiatives to assist people to gain employment and also help with financial worries.
 - (d) **Local Authority Carbon Management Programme** – As one of 63 Local Authorities taking part in Phase 7 of the Carbon Trust’s Local Authority Carbon Management (LACM) Programme, we were pleased to note the progress of the programme which provided technical and change management support to help assess potential carbon emissions savings from the Council’s operations, particularly from the Council’s buildings and vehicle fleet. The programme also provided free technical advice and support for the development of a Five Year Carbon Management Action Plan which highlighted actions that could be taken at no cost, together with investment projects, which would result in significant fuel savings and consequent reductions in carbon emissions and costs savings.
 - (e) **Conservation Area Character Appraisals Update** – We were advised of the ongoing work in order to ensure Conservation Area Appraisals were available for all Conservation Areas in Darlington and of the consultations that had been undertaken as part of that process. Between 1968 and 1997 there were 16 designated conservation areas, during 1978 and 1999 extensions were made to four of those areas and a recent

programme of appraisals had resulted in six areas now having up to date Appraisals. The Committee discussed the order of priority in which the appraisals are done, suggestions for other conservation area designation in the future and the possibility of adding 'buildings of local interest' to the record.

- (f) **Greener Darlington Theme Group** – Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to be informed of the current work of the Greener Darlington Theme Group
 - (g) **Prosperous Theme Group** – Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to be informed of the current work of the Prosperous Theme Group. Committee agreed to establish a Worklessness Task and Finish Review Group to consider the draft Darlington Employability Framework, including Scrutiny of Key Stakeholders such as Job Centre Plus.
 - (h) **Policy Review** -
 - (i) **Arts Task and Finish Review Group** – The Review Group held its second meeting on 14th January, 2010 received further information on the responsibilities of Officers, links to external bodies, explanation of what the 'arts' are in Darlington and specific project funding opportunities and grants available. Further meetings have been arranged on 11th and 18th March to meet Arts Organisations in the Borough..
 - (ii) **Street Lighting Task and Finish Review Group** – The Group met on 10th November, 2009 and concluded that no further action be taken.
2. Since the last meeting of Council, the Chair of the Committee has attended the following meetings :-
- (a) Various briefings with Officers.
 - (b) Greener Theme Group on 25th January, 2010.
 - (c) Borough Arts Collection Panel meeting at the Arts Centre on 4th February, 2010
 - (d) Prosperous Theme Group on 11th February, 2010.
 - (e) E.U.'s Covenants of Mayors a programme which seeks to contribute to the reduction of CO2 emissions, held at Durham County Cricket Club, Chester le Street also on 11th February, 2010.
 - (f) Darlington and Teesside Bike It Action Day the Arts Centre.
 - (g) Members Training/Briefing Session on the Town Centre Fringe.

I have also hired a Dutch Bike!

Councillor Dorothy Long
Chair of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee