
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) **Draft Annual Report 2008/09** – We considered and approved the draft Annual Report of Economy and Environment Scrutiny highlighting the work undertaken for the Municipal Year 2008/09 and forwarded to Council.
 - (b) **Draft Work Programme 2009/10** – We have given consideration to the draft Work Programme for the next Municipal Year and will continue to update and add to our Work Programme throughout the Year. We also examined Cabinet’s Forward Plan, in order to identify areas of particular interest or concern to be included within our Work Programme and gave consideration to topics/subjects that we may wish to review/scrutinise during the Municipal Year 2009/2010.
 - (c) **Economic Downturn Update** – We were pleased to receive a report which highlighted this Council’s response to the economic downturn and recession. The initiatives included a range of housing projects, co-ordinated advice and guidance, Credit Union development, tackling fuel poverty and business support. Future initiatives included free school meals take up campaign, review with LSP Partners and the development of a Financial Inclusion Strategy.
 - (d) **Traffic Management Act 2004 – Network Management Plan** – At Cabinet on 3rd February a number of Sections of the Traffic Management Plan were approved with further sections currently being developed and it was recommended that Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee monitor development of that Plan. In that regard we received a progress report which summarised various actions, performance tasks and intervention criteria which required monitoring and implementation. A Member Training Session on the Act and Network Plans is scheduled for 29th April, 2009 and Scrutiny will continue to monitor the progress of the Plans.
 - (e) **Yellow Lining Works in the Town Centre** – Further to previous Scrutiny Committee concerns on Yellow Lining Works in the Town Centre we were pleased to receive a report on the review and maintenance of yellow lines and other parking restriction markings which were a critical element of the Civil Parking Enforcement Project. Several areas which require upgrading have been highlighted following the review process and it is essential that they are all collated into maintenance packages which can be issued to contractors in a controlled manner in accordance with the project plan.
 - (f) **Parks and Countryside Ranger Service** – Scrutiny were delighted to be informed of the recently established Borough-wide Parks and Countryside Ranger Service which brings together the ad hoc arrangements and provided a dedicated service covering

nature reserves, formal parks and open spaces. The role of the service is to engage with local residents, work closely with the Friends Groups, put on a range of events and provide a visible presence within the open spaces.

- (g) **Waste Management Contract** – The new Waste Management Contract commenced in April 2009 with Stonegrave Aggregates to treat, recycle and dispose of all Darlington Borough Council’s municipal waste from 6th April, 2009 and Scrutiny were pleased to receive a report on progress with regard to implementation of the Contract. Immediate improvements include overall general appearance of the site, signage and layout.
- (h) **Groundwork West Durham and Darlington** – Scrutiny Committee were privileged to have Nigel Potter of Groundwork North East attend Scrutiny and give an update of the work being undertaken with Council Officers, Ward Members and community representatives. Details were supplied of the future programme of works which Groundwork were to focus on during 2009/10 which included supporting the Green Spaces Forum, delivery and develop the newly-established Play Ranger project and continue to strengthen partnerships and develop new ones.
- (i) **Outdoor Play Areas** – A number of Play Areas have been improved over the past three years, mainly from Local Area Agreement funding, other external funding and Section 106 monies. We were delighted to learn of further funding being made available to allow improvement to further play areas. Eleven sites have been identified for improvement with a 2009/10 revenue allocation and an initial list of sites has been drawn up for improvements for 2010/11.
- (j) **Darlington Local Strategic Partnership – Prosperous Darlington Theme Group Delivery Plan 2008/2011** - Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee were pleased to receive the Prosperous Darlington Theme Group – Delivery Plan 2008-2011. The Plan outlined performance against targets set for the short to long term for Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement Indicators. The Delivery Plan also highlighted priorities and work strands with the Action Plan reflecting the recently established nature of the Prosperous Darlington Theme Group.
- (k) **Performance Report Third Quarter 2008/09** – As part of our continuous monitoring of scrutiny of the three service plans for which this Committee is responsible for, we received a report on the performance for the 3rd Quarter 2008/09 which also included dedicated monitoring of those indications contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement relevant to this Scrutiny Committee. I am also very pleased to report that overall, performance of the three service plans are on target although there is no data reported for 52% of the indicators.
- (l) **Local Development Framework Draft Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document – Consultation Responses and Next Steps** – We were pleased to receive a report on the Local Development Framework (LDF) Draft Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which had been amended following consultations undertaken during January/February 2009. A further consultation exercise will be undertaken with a sample of respondents to ensure that when adopted by Council on 16th July, 2009 the SPD was acceptable to all users and

the wider community.

(m) Policy Review -

- (i) **Minimisation Review Group** – Economy and Environment Scrutiny finalised their findings of this Review Group on 17th April, 2009 and forwarded its recommendations to Cabinet. I hope to report Cabinet’s response at the next meeting of Council.
- (ii) **Development Control Review Group** – Economy and Environment Scrutiny finalised their findings of this Review Group on 17th April, 2009 and forwarded its recommendations to Cabinet. I hope to report Cabinet’s response at the next meeting of Council.

2. Since the last meeting of Council, the Chair of the Committee has attended the following meetings:-

- Various briefings with Officers.

Chair of Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee