
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 2009/10** – We have considered the draft work programme for the next Municipal Year and possible review topics. In considering our work programme and Review topics for next year, we have ensured that any work which we undertake takes into account the overall effect of the strategic plans of the Council such as the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement targets, the Council’s budget and Cabinet’s Forward Plan. One of the main areas of work which we will be continuing with during the next Municipal Year is in relation to Street Scene. Members will recall that this is a piece of work which we have been undertaking, however, as Officers were also undertaking a review into the management structure and the services provided by Street Scene, we agreed to suspend our work until the outcome of that review and until any changes had been implemented.
 - (b) **Local Strategic Partnership – Greener Darlington Theme Group Delivery Plan 2008-11** – We were pleased to receive the Delivery Plan 2008-11 for the Greener Darlington Themed Group. The Delivery Plan has been agreed by the Darlington Partnership Board to ensure that the relevant Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets are achieved and our Scrutiny Committee also has a role in monitoring these targets and adding value to the Themed Group by providing advice and expertise and assisting with shared objectives. I, as Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee, will be attending future meetings of the Greener Darlington Theme Group and reporting back to our Scrutiny Committee as necessary.
 - (c) **Community Safety Plan 2008-11 – Performance April 2008 to February 2009** – We have received an update on the delivery of the Borough’s Community Safety Plan 2008-2011 and the targets within Darlington’s Local Area Agreements. We were pleased to see that between April 2008 and February 2009, there had been a four per cent reduction in the number of crimes reported by the Police in Darlington, compared to the same period in 2007/08 and a four per cent reduction for the rolling twelve months up to 28th February, 2009. Sustaining performance is a key challenge for the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, however, it is also pleasing to report that the majority of actions within the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Delivery Plan have been implemented and progress against the refreshed plans for 2009/11 will continue to be monitored by us.

As highlighted in one of our previous reports to you the Crime and Disorder and Children’s Trust were awarded £790K over three years to support the delivery of the Governments Youth Crime Action Plan at a local level, which would be used to purchase a highly visible mobile unit to provide a base for deployment of resources at

the heart of local communities experiencing problems.

- (d) **3rd Quarter Performance Reporting** - Following a review, Officers have refreshed the way in which service performance is reported to Scrutiny. In line with this revised approach, we have received a report detailing the service performance position of the five service plans for which we have responsibility for monitoring and for those elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement for which we also have responsibility for monitoring.
- (e) **CCTV – Update** – Officers have given us updated information on the services provided by the CCTV Control Room. As Members will be aware, the Control Room provides a range of services including monitoring CCTV across the Borough and for other clients, intruder alarm and fire alarm monitoring for Council premises, lone worker monitoring and monitoring support for the Council’s Lifeline Service. Since April 2008, the Control Room has dealt with 344 incidents in Darlington involving 458 people, which the Police have been involved with and the evidence provided by CCTV has enabled the Police to take action against perpetrators of crime where this has been appropriate. It is also pleasing to report that the majority of car parks in Darlington are now covered by CCTV and this year, car crime has been at an all time low of just four crimes recorded. We were informed that although this Council currently monitored Wear Valley CCTV, it is anticipated that this would be transferring to the new Unitary Durham County Council in the near future.
- (f) **Rent Charges – Proposed Alterations** – We are pleased that Cabinet have supported the Government’s initiative and have agreed to reduce the rent increases for Council housing in 2009/10 to ease the financial burden of Council tenants during the current economic climate. It was highlighted that whilst Communities and Local Government are covering the costs arising from the reduced rental income they have made it clear that Local Housing Authorities would be responsible for any additional administration costs.

Councillor Doris Jones
Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee