
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** – The Committee considered the Work Programme for the 2009/10 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 addition to our regular consideration of the Work Programme, we also undertook a brainstorming session prior to our ordinary meeting which enabled Members of the Committee to highlight any future items for our Work Programme. David Goodchild, Policy Adviser, from the Chief Executive’s Department, also attended the session and gave us a presentation and overview of our relevant Performance Indicators.

- (b) **Presentation on Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009** – We received an informative presentation from the Borough Solicitor on the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 and its implications for this Committee. The regulations recommend the establishment of a Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee, the aim of which is to enhance the existing partnership arrangements, by developing a clear structure for overseeing and reviewing the delivery of joint responses on community safety and by creating a clearer link between partner agencies and the public on community safety. As part of the presentation reference was made to this Committee’s existing powers, together with the new powers, which came into force on 30th April, 2009.

The Borough Solicitor, during her presentation, made particular reference to the Community Call for Action, which came into force in April, 2009, and gave Councillors the right to raise matters of local concern with their Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee then decides whether to use their powers to investigate the issue further.

We have requested a further update report on the regulations, to be included within our Work Programme for our next ordinary meeting.

- (c) **Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee – Co-optee** – The Council received a request from the Chief Executive of the Durham Police Authority, to co-opt a representative of the Police Authority, Mr. Tony Thompson, onto this Scrutiny Committee. We agreed to appoint Mr. Thompson as a co-optee, in accordance with the Regulations, and we look forward to Mr. Thompson attending and contributing to future meetings of our Committee.

- (d) **Community Safety Plan 2008/11 Performance April to June 2009** – As part of our continuing monitoring role, we received a report on the delivery of the Borough's Community Safety Plan 2008/11 and the targets contained within Darlington's Local Area Agreement. It was pleasing to note that crime statistics are down by four per cent compared to the same period in 2007/08, however, domestic burglary and theft from motor vehicles remain the key challenges for the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), as well as sustaining performance, and we were impressed to hear that a number of initiatives had been implemented to help tackle these problems.
- (e) **Review of Performance Indicators** – We received performance data for a number of indicators in the Safer Communities, Building Services and Housing Services Service Plans, which were NI016, NI017, NI032, LI2100, NI187i. In addition, to assist us in facilitating our ongoing review of Street Scene, we also received performance data for NI195 and NI196. It was pleasing to note that the perception of anti-social behaviour as a very big, or fairly big, problem has reduced between 2003/04 and 2008/09 and for a number of the types of anti-social behaviour, the reductions have been substantial.

We agreed that the Committee would set up a Task and Finish Review Group to examine NI187 'tackling fuel poverty'. We will invite representatives from a number of organisations, including Age Concern, to ascertain their views on what services and advice are offered to residents in relation to fuel poverty. We also agreed that a further report on LI2100 'Urgent Repairs' be included within our Work Programme for our next ordinary meeting, to enable us to seek further information on the 2008/09 performance.

- (f) **The Darlington Compact** – We received an update on the current position in relation to the development of the new Darlington Compact, which is being developed to supersede the first Darlington Compact, 'Challenging Practice', which was adopted in 2004. The project is being led by eVOLution with support from council officers. The focus of the Compact is on promoting a 'living compact', to support the on-going development of relationships and ways of working, that generate added value for the benefit of Darlington. We made a number of recommendations, in relation to the Compact, prior to it being considered by Cabinet on 3rd November, 2009.
- (g) **Street Scene Review** – We received an update on the progress to date on this Scrutiny Committee's major review into Street Scene. Since setting the terms of reference, Members of the Review Group have met on a number of occasions and, as part of the research, we have conducted surveys to seek the views of residents of the Borough on the services and we have also undertaken visits to Hartlepool and Stockton to view how their Street Scene Services operate.

We have re-affirmed the membership of the Review Group and have agreed to focus on supporting and promoting the Street Scene 'Litter Initiative Campaign', which is being re-launched, and we feel that it is an ideal opportunity for our Review Group to be involved with the campaign and engage with stakeholders and the community to provide positive outcomes.

Since the commencement of our Review, we have gathered information on a wide number of issues, which have been considered and discussed at our meetings, where one of the main issues highlighted was in relation to dog fouling. As Members will be aware, a Dog Control Order within the Borough is being consulted on at present with a view to it being implemented later this financial year. Following completion of the review into litter, the next phase of the Review will look at the implementation and effectiveness of the Dog Control Order.

A meeting has been arranged to re-evaluate our terms of reference and I will update you in my next report to Council.

Councillor Doris Jones
Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee