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**OVERVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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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.
  - (b) **Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015** – Following the introduction of the 2002 Homelessness Act, which required all Local Authorities to complete a review on homelessness and develop an appropriate strategy and action plan, we were delighted to receive a revised copy of the Homelessness Strategy for this Authority to cover the period 2010-2015. The development of the Strategy has been co-ordinated by the Local Authority but has been supported by a Steering Group with representation from the public, private and voluntary sector. It is pleasing to note that, as an Authority we are meeting or exceeding all Government targets relating to homelessness prevention and that the Housing Options Team have consistently achieved top quartile performance nationally in relation to homelessness preventions.

We were also advised of the Governments vision of ending rough sleeping by 2012 and it was pleasing to note that Darlington had already achieved this target in 2006. Successful joint agency initiatives such as ‘Below Zero’ have been established which provide guaranteed temporary accommodation for any homeless person should the external temperature fall below zero degrees on any given night in Darlington.
  - (c) **Building Services Performance** – You may recall that in my update report to you in October, 2009, this Scrutiny Committee requested a further report on the performance of LI 2100 (the completion of urgent repairs in Government timescales). Since our last update it is pleasing to note that the performance of repairs completed in Government time limits had improved from 90.15 per cent to 93.6 per cent compared to the target of 97.5 per cent. A number of areas have been identified that require review and an improvement action plan has been implemented which includes five key areas and this Committee will monitor against performance. I will keep you updated on the progress in my future reports to Council.
  - (d) **Service Plan Performance 2nd Quarter 2009/10** – 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 are delighted to note that the overall aggregated target for the five service plans were above target, although data was only available for 55 per cent of the indicators.

Committee have agreed for a training session to be arranged to examine performance plus and get a better understanding of performance as a whole.

**Gully Cleaning** – We received an update on the progress in delivering the recommendations from this Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Flooding Task and Finish Review Group Final Report. We were informed that a double shift had been deployed on gully services from September 2008 through to the Summer of 2009 and that the total number of gullies cleansed against target from January 2009 through to October 2009 was 92 per cent.

We were informed of the Pitt Review, its recommendations for this Authority and the involvement and linkages for this Committee in the review.

We have requested a further report to be brought back to Committee explaining how 92 per cent of gullies have been cleansed and we have requested that the possibility of gully cleansing being included in the weekly Street Scene updates to all Members.

- (e) **Greener Darlington Theme Group** – Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to be informed of the outcome of the Local Strategic Partnership Greener Theme Group meeting held on 30th November, 2009. Topics given consideration included the Local Food project, One Darlington Analysis Framework, Greener Theme Group Quarterly Performance report, Third Sector Green Network Event, Local Transport Plan 3 Consultation Events, Beauty and the Bike and Feedback from the Local Strategic Partnership Board Meeting. Members were advised that the Local Food Sub Group had been established and that the first meeting had taken place to decide the scope of the sub-groups work. It was pleasing to note that that the Local Food Sub Group had been established and that the first meeting had taken place to decide the scope of the sub-groups work

We also received a copy of the Greener Darlington Performance Monitoring Report which gave us an update on the overall performance against targets contained within the Greener Darlington Delivery Plan. We were informed that the three indicators covered by the Greener Theme Group, NI 188 (adapting to climate change) was showing to be on target, NI 192 (percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting) was underperforming but was expected to reach the year end target and NI 186 (reduction in CO2 emissions) had no formal status due to the latest information available nationally being for the year 2006.

**Councillor Doris Jones**  
**Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee**