
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.
 - (b) **Greener Darlington Theme Group** – Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to be informed of the outcome of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Greener Theme Group meeting held on 25th January, 2010. Topics given consideration included the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, Local Transport Plan 3 Key Outcomes, Green Issues – Publicity and Promotion, Feedback from the LSP Board and Future Events.
 - (c) **Healthier Lives For Children and Young People Living in County Durham and Darlington** - At a meeting of the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group held on 2nd November, 2009, the Locality Director of Public Health, submitted the Director of Public Health’s (DPH’s) Annual Report entitled ‘Healthier Lives for Children and Young People in County Durham and Darlington’ and each of the Scrutiny Chairs identified areas within that report which they felt would be beneficial for their individual Scrutiny Committees to undertake a piece of work into.

This Scrutiny Committee have agreed to establish a Review Group to scrutinise what the Council and its Partners are doing to reduce drugs and alcohol at a neighbourhood level to achieve a healthier lives for children and young people in Darlington and the initial areas that we intend to consider are in relation to targeted youth support, scrutinising the ‘Treatment Plan’ and sponsoring a ‘Mapping Exercise’ for information sharing. I will keep updated on the progress of this Review in my future reports to Council.

- (d) **Community Safety Plan 2008-11** - 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 there was a nine per cent reduction compared to the same period in 2008 in the number of crimes that had been recorded by the Police in Darlington and for the rolling twelve months up to the 31st December, 2009 crime had reduced by two per cent compared to the same period in 2007/08, however, Domestic Burglary and Robbery remained key challenges for the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

It was pleasing to note that a Group had been established by the CDRP to address the issues around serious acquisitive crime.

- (e) **Community Safety Plan Refresh 2010** – Following recommendations arising from the review of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which requires the CDRP to carry out an annual assessment of crime, disorder and harm caused by substance misuse to inform the development of a three year Community Safety Plan, we received an overview report on the refresh of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership's (CDRP) Community Safety Plan 2008-11. We were advised of the actions that were taken to refresh the plan and the priorities contained within it.
- (f) **Safer Darlington Theme Group** – Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to be informed of the outcome of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Greener Theme Group meeting held on 7th January, 2010. Topics given consideration included no cold zones, the Strategic Assessment and its priorities, the performance of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, the progress of the delivery plans, the Government's action plan on tackling hate crime, small retailers capital fund, the Campaign on Domestic Abuse and the Safer Communities Forum Agenda.
- (g) **Gully Cleaning** – Since my last update to Council we requested a further update report on Gully Cleaning and the progress in delivering the recommendations from this Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Flooding Task and Finish Review Group Final Report. As previously stated we were informed that a double shift had been deployed on gully services from September 2008 through to the Summer of 2009 and that additional resources had been allocated within Street Scene to the gully cleansing programme to ensure that actual gullies against target rises to between 90- 95 per cent over the next six months and thereafter was sustained. We were delighted to see that the overall percentage of gullies that have been cleansed against programme for the year is 78 per cent, which shows the positive outcomes of the Review Group.
- (h) **Street Scene Review Group – Anti Litter Initiative Campaign** – As you will be aware at our Scrutiny Committee held on 15th September, 2009, we agreed to re-affirm the membership of the Review Group and its Terms of Reference to focus, in the interim, on supporting and promoting the re-launch of the Council's Anti-Litter Initiative Campaign and to engage with stakeholders and the community to provide positive outcomes, which also linked into PI 195. Since that date the Group has met formally on four occasions, focusing mainly on monitoring and updating the Anti Litter Initiative Action Plan and the Lead Officers responsible for the delivery of the actions have been interviewed and questioned by the Group to ensure that the actions were effective and achievable.

Councillor Dixon and myself have also had a photo shoot which appeared in the November edition of the Town Crier to promote and raise awareness of the Litter Campaign.

In addition, an award ceremony was arranged for the Mayor to congratulate a pupil from Mount Pleasant Primary School for his work that he does for his school and community in relation to litter picking. I was delighted to see That Brandon has been awarded the Young Citizen of the Year at the 'Best of Darlington Awards'.

From the work this Review Group has undertaken, we are satisfied with the Anti Litter Initiative Action Plan that has been compiled and the targets and work contained within it, we also feel that it is a positive and highly successful piece of work. This Scrutiny Committee have endorsed the recommendations, which have been forwarded to the relevant officers for their action. We will continue to monitor the campaign and I will keep you updated the progress.

- (i) **Street Lighting Task and Finish Review Group** – The Group met on Wednesday, 2nd December, 2009 with Dave Winstanley, Assistant Director of Highways and Engineering and explored the duty of highway authority in relation to street lighting, the criteria for providing new street lighting within existing revenue and capital budgets, procedures in place for prioritising capital budgets available for street lighting and future provision of street lighting and the Carbon Management Agenda. From the work the Group has undertaken, Members were satisfied that the policy and criteria is satisfactory and that no further work is required.
- (j) **Handypersons Services Task and Finish Review Group** – We agreed to establish a Task and Finish Review Group to examine the Handypersons Service and scrutinise the proposed changes to the service specification. The Group have met on two occasions with Alan, Glew, Housing Strategy and Renewals Manager and explored the Darlington Handyperson Service Specification and the Home Safety Checklist for older people for care and repair use. From the work the Group has undertaken we are satisfied with the changes to the Handypersons Service specification and how it meets the needs of its clients. We also feel that it is a positive and highly successful service, although we did make a number of recommendations to improve the Home Safety Checklist which have been endorsed by Scrutiny and forwarded to the relevant Officer.

Councillor Doris Jones
Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee