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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 2010/11** – The Committee considered the Work Programme for this 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) **Anti-Litter Initiative Campaign Action Plan** – Following our review on the Anti Litter Initiative Campaign we have continued to monitor the actions and targets contained within the plan and the progress that has been made to date in relation to the recommendations of the review. We were pleased to note that since the inception of the initiative this Council has received a high amount of publicity cumulating in the Authority featuring prominently on ITV’s Tonight programme broadcasted on 9th September, 2010, and the ongoing enforcement around litter and fly tipping. The Scrutiny Committee would like to congratulate the hard work and dedication of all officers and groups involved in this initiative.
  - (c) **Community Safety Plan 2008/11 - Performance April - September 2010** - 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 23 per cent reduction compared to the same period in 2008/09 in the number of crimes that had been recorded by the Police in Darlington and for the rolling twelve months up to the 30th June, 2010 crime had reduced by 12 per cent compared to the same period in 2008/09. It is also pleasing to report that the majority of indicators are on target. Anti-Social Behaviour, reducing offending and reoffending, violet crime, domestic abuse and vulnerable people remain key priorities for the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
  - (d) **Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy** - As part of our monitoring role, we received a report on the progress of the actions contained within the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy, which aims to provide a framework to deliver consumer choice, promote healthy living by improving conditions across the Borough and also contributes towards the delivery of One Darlington Perfectly Placed by creating a safe environment and protecting the vulnerable. Members were particularly encouraged by the progress that has been made across all of the 14 key areas within the Strategy.
  - (e) **Chewing Gum Removal** - Scrutiny Committee requested an update report on chewing gum removal within the Town Centre and its associated costs. We were informed of

the progress to date on the areas that have already been serviced, which included Blackwellgate, High and Low Row, Bondgate, Tubwell Row and Northgate. The work was undertaken by two operatives for four hours each morning (for a 25-week period), with an annual cost totalling to £13,620 per year.

- (f) **Safer Darlington Theme Group** - We welcomed the opportunity to be informed of the outcome of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Safer Theme Group meeting held on 12th August, 2010. Topics given consideration included performance, Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment, funding, progress on the delivery plan, employment opportunities for offenders and Inside Justice Event.
- (g) **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 29th July, 2010. Topics given consideration included Annual Performance Report, Local Food, feedback from the Local Strategic Partnership Board meeting and Green Network.
- (h) **Assisted Refuse Collection Task and Finish Review Group** – Following our six monthly Street Scene report we agreed to establish a Task and Finish Review Group to explore the number of assisted refuse collections missed and to examine the protocol in place from receipt of application to implementation of service. The Group met with the Head of Street Scene and were satisfied with the explanation and information that we received in relation to the service. We will continue to monitor the service once the second phase of the optimisation review has been implemented.
- (i) **Weed Killing Task and Finish Review Group** - We agreed to establish a Task and Finish Review Group to examine the changes to the pesticides that this Authority use in relation to the EU legislation. The Group met with the Head of Street Scene and explored the role of the sub-contractors and the coverage of the Borough that they treated, the impact of using quad bikes and the timing and monitoring of spraying and treatment. From the work the Group has undertaken we recommended that weed killing/spraying be brought back in house next year with the feasibility of dedicated staff being trained to enable a more frequent treatment of weeds which has been endorsed by Scrutiny and forwarded to the relevant Officer.

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