
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 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) **Albert Hill Skip Hire Premises** – Following the presentation that we received in August, 2010 on the fire that occurred at Albert Hill on 8th July, 2010, representatives from this Local Authority and the Environment Agency gave us an update on the work that they were undertaking to regulate activities at the premises. We were particularly encouraged with the improvements made in procedures which have led to the development of a protocol that should now allow for any agency concerned to declare a tactical (Silver) level incident, which in turn would result in structured and timely communication with all those affected by the event. Scrutiny has requested a further report from the Health Protection Agency on their involvement with the incident and I will update you in my next report to Council.
 - (c) **Performance Report 2nd Quarter** - As part of our monitoring role we are responsible for scrutinising the two service plans which fall within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee those being, Housing and Housing Benefits and the relevant indicators for Safer Communities and Connecting with Communities. Along with the service plans this Scrutiny also has the responsibility of scrutinising elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy and One Darlington : Perfectly Placed 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 were pleased to note that the overall aggregated target for the two service plans were above target, although one indicator was below target performance in the Housing Benefits service.
 - (d) **Compass Choice Based Lettings Policy Review** – Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to be informed of the proposed changes to the Compass Choice Based Lettings allocations policy, which will be implemented in conjunction with our Tees Valley partners in April, 2011. We were particularly encouraged with the proposed changes to people leaving the HM Forces being awarded priority band 1.
 - (e) **Street Scene** – We continue to monitor the services provided by Street Scene and we have been informed of the new performance framework that has been developed which was based around the key areas provided by Street Scene and broken down into each of

the five areas. Over a six month period, 5,231 requests for service had been received compared to 6,402 requests for the same period in 2009, which shows an 18 per cent reduction as a result of better performance by teams on the ground. We were pleased to note that the overall performance of Street Scene has continued to move in a positive direction and that Darlington has been approached to represent the region in next years Britain in Bloom awards.

- (f) **Tenant Board Performance** – We received information in relation to the work that has been undertaken by the Tenants Board for the period September to November, 2010. We were encouraged by the community events that the Board has been involved in and the work that has been undertaken to promote new initiatives and ideas to increase the involvement of tenants in the work of Housing Services.
- (g) **Community Safety Plan 2008/11 Performance April-November 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 seven 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 November, 2010 crime had reduced by 10 per cent compared to the same period in 2008/09. It is also pleasing to note that the majority of indicators were on target, although Anti-Social Behaviour, reducing offending and reoffending, violet crime, domestic abuse and vulnerable people remain key priorities for the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
- (h) **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 7th October, 2010. Topics given consideration included performance, delivery plans, Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment and communications.
- (i) **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 28th October, 2010. Topics given consideration included the future of the Partnership, Darlington climate change strategy and action plan, feedback from the Local Strategic Partnership Board meeting and Green Network.

Councillor Doris Jones
Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee