
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 for the remainder of 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) **Medium Term Financial Plan** – A special meeting was held to give further consideration to the draft Medium-Term Financial Plan following the feedback received on initial proposals released in November 2010 and the Local Government Finance Settlement received in December 2010. Members received an overview of the financial position, Government grants and the pressures facing the Council over the next few years. Members scrutinised the impact of the proposals relevant to this Scrutiny Committee and forwarded recommendations to a special meeting of Resources Scrutiny Committee held on 7th February, 2011.
 - (c) **Cemeteries and Crematorium** – We received information in relation to this Council’s Cemeteries and Crematorium Service and were informed of the directive that the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) issued in relation to the requirement to abate mercury emissions from flue gases by 50 per cent by the end of 2012 and that it was anticipated that 100 per cent abatement would be required by the end of 2020 to comply with Annex 2 of the OSPAR Convention, although this was subject to final agreement by DEFRA at present. Scrutiny Committee welcomed the opportunity to express our views in relation to the recycling of metals from cremations and fully supported the implementation of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management scheme in Darlington with any surplus funding being distributed to relevant charities.
 - (d) **Dog Control Orders** – As part of our work on the services provided by Street Scene we requested an update report in relation to the enforcement action taken since the implementation of the Dog Control Orders Regulations 2006, which were implemented by this Authority on 12th April, 2010. Since the inception of the Act until the end of December, 2010 we were informed that a total of eight fixed penalty notices had been issued to dog walkers, of which three of the cases were forwarded to the Magistrates Court as a result of non-payment and that a further 11 formal warnings had been issued to dog walkers for non compliance of the orders. Scrutiny Committee acknowledged the work undertaken by the enforcement team.
 - (e) **Fly Tipping within the Borough** – Scrutiny Committee requested an update report on issues relating to illegal fly tipping of waste across the Borough. It was pleasing to

note that there was an 11 per cent reduction in fly tipping across the Borough in the last year compared to the same period in 2009 and that there had also been an improvement in relation to the Service Level Agreement that Street Services have where identified response times were allocated to various categories regarding fly tipping. It was also positive to note that in relation to the statutory duty to provide information on the number of fly tips experienced and the subsequent number of investigations undertaken by fly capture this Authority's performance was found to be effective, although Members were concerned that it costs in the region of £125,000 per annum to collect fly tipping. Members requested further information on these costs and agreed to compare these costs with other authorities at our next meeting.

- (f) **Enhanced Handyperson Service** – Following the Task and Finish Review that Scrutiny established to examine the Enhanced Handypersons Service and scrutinise the proposed changes to the service specification, we requested that officers review Home Safety and endorse the recommendations formulated by this Committee. We have had this update, and it is pleasing to note that the majority of recommendations have been considered and implemented and we feel that it is a positive and highly successful service.
- (g) **Healthier Lives for Children and Young People Living in County Durham and Darlington** – Following the piece of work that we had undertaken in relation to the Director of Public Health's report entitled 'Healthier Lives for Children and Young People Living in County Durham and Darlington we requested an update on the Targeted Youth Support (TYS) arrangements, which were designed in part to improve how young people's alcohol and drug misuse at a community/neighbourhood level were dealt with. Since the conclusion of our task and finish review group we were pleased to note that the proposals for the YYS have been agreed by the Children's Trust and that from October, 2010 weekly multi-agency YYS meetings have taken place, rotating across the three geographical areas of Darlington. We were informed that the YYS process was developing operationally and further embedding of this practice would ensure that more young people would receive a better co-ordinated service, sooner, with greater prospects of good outcomes. Scrutiny is mindful of the potential impact of the significant restructuring and efficiencies required of all partners and will continue to monitor the impact of the initiative.
- (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 4th November, 2010. Topics given consideration included performance, Executive Board update, 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 13th January, 2011. Topics given consideration included the future of the Partnership, Litter Free Durham, Climate Week 21, Local Development Framework Accommodating Growth Plan and Sustainable Transport Fund.

Councillor Doris Jones
Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee