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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) **Albert Hill Skip Hire Premises** – Following the presentation and the report that we previously received on the fire that occurred at the Albert Hill Skip Hire on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2010 we requested information from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) on their involvement with the incident and the reasons why the Air Quality Management Cell was not activated. We were informed that no strategic or tactical coordinating multiagency group was convened and that through discussion with the Environment Agency and the Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards that if the Air Quality Management Cell had been triggered it would not have altered the response to the fire. A representative from the Environment Agency was also in attendance at the meeting and updated us on the enforcement around the business and the chemical monitoring and sampling on site.
  - (b) **Service Plan Performance Third 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 we also have the responsibility of scrutinising elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy and One Darlington : Perfectly Placed. It was pleasing to note that the overall aggregated target for the two service plans were above target, although two indicators within the Housing and Housing Benefits service plans were below target performance.
  - (c) **Fly Tipping Within the Borough of Darlington** – Scrutiny Committee requested information on the costs relating to illegal fly tipping across the Borough and how these compare to other Local Authorities. This Local Authority's costs were comparable with other local authorities in the region.
  - (d) **Winter Maintenance 2010/11** – Scrutiny Committee requested information in relation to winter maintenance services for 2010/11, which was managed by Environmental Services in accordance with the provisions of the Council's winter maintenance plan. We were informed that due to the severe weather conditions 60 per cent of rock salt had been used by mid December and due to national shortage representatives of all north east Local Authorities met to discuss the shortage of rock salt and a decision was taken collectively to order additional rock salt from abroad to top up existing stock levels. We were particularly pleased to note that two quad bikes had been contracted to undertake weed killing within the Borough and that they would be utilised during the winter months to grit footpaths.

- (e) **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 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2011. Topics given consideration included Community Safety Partnership Governance and Structures, Illicit Tobacco Campaign, performance, Partnership Risk Assessment, Safer Communities Forum, communications and reducing re-offending.

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