
OVERVIEW OF PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Place Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Work Programme 2013/14

2. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2013/14 and possible review topics and in doing so, we have taken into account the reduced resources available within the Authority and ensured that, in recommending our work programme to Monitoring and Co-ordination Group, that any work we undertake will have demonstrable outcomes and contribute to the work of the Council and its strategic aims and objectives. Following discussion Scrutiny Committee agreed to update its Work Programme to reflect the decisions of the Committee. We will seek specific updates on on-going projects particularly the Town Centre Fringe and the Economic Strategy in this Municipal Year.

Carbon Management, Climate Change, Fuel Poverty and Green Economy

3. We received a very informative presentation on Carbon Management, Climate Change, Fuel Poverty and the Green Economy which highlighted the Council's carbon reduction commitments, rising energy costs, the aims of the Council's Carbon Management Plan (CMP) and the targeted savings which could be achieved. Details were also provided of the future targets and aims of the CMP.
4. The Council's progress on Climate Change was also highlighted and Scrutiny was advised that in 2010 40 per cent of target reductions of CO2 emissions had been achieved. Concerns were raised about the contribution of academies to our progress on reaching our carbon management targets. Their independence from the local authority may necessitate their omission from our benchmarking and this needs further discussion.
5. Fuel poverty is a concern with over 10 per cent of household income being spent on fuel to maintain warmth for health and comfort. With 20.7 per cent fuel poor households in the Borough (2010) the most affected were rural areas, older people, children and young people, those on benefits, disabled people and those with long-term illness. Committee were advised of Warm Up North which is a consortium of six local authorities and supported by Energy Saving Trust.
6. We were provided with details of the growing green economy and what needed to be done to support this sector.

Challenging Performance Making a Difference

7. We have received a presentation on the performance information within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee and also the future role of involvement of this Scrutiny Committee in the monitoring of this information. The presentation made reference to the Frameworks and Delivery Plans within our remit and particular reference was made to some key performance measures which Committee may want to review and ensure they are fit for purpose. Detailed information was circulated to all Members and any concerns will be raised at our next meeting in September.

Budget Saving Proposals

8. Cabinet, at its meeting held on 9th April, 2013, agreed a number of budget savings proposals, some of which related to areas within the remit of our Scrutiny Committee, and we were requested to consider whether we should undertake any further work to identify and scrutinise any potential risks arising from those proposals at an early stage of implementation.
9. We agreed that it would be more appropriate to allow time for the proposals to be embedded and we will assess any impact at a later date if necessary.

Place Scrutiny Workshop – Making and Growing Places Preferred Options Development Plan Document

10. On 8th July a workshop was held for Members to be consulted on the Making and Growing Places Preferred Options Development Document. Members received presentations on Darlington Strategic Locations, Housing, Green Infrastructure, Development Limits, Retail provision and Employment Land. There was time for detailed discussion and our comments were captured most ably by the planning team. A final presentation on Darlington Strategic Locations and information on the consultation process concluded an interesting morning. All Members are encouraged to respond to the document by 9 August 2013.
11. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended :-
 - (a) Various meetings with Officers.
 - (b) Joint briefings with Officers and Portfolio Holders.
 - (c) Peer Challenge. Attendance at briefings, interview and final presentation.
 - (d) Budget Advisory Panels.

**Councillor Dorothy Long
Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee**