

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 April 2015

PRESENT – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Carson, Cossins, Culley, Donohue, Harman and L Hughes. (7)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin, Lawton and EA Richmond. (3)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – ()

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Ian Thompson, Assistant Director, Community Services, Steve Petch, Place Strategy Manager and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – In relation to Minute P56/Apr/15 below Councillor Long declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Board Member of Theatre Hullabaloo.

P53. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Scrutiny Committee held on 5 and 12 February and 20 March 2015.

RESOLVED – That, with the deletion of Councillor L Hughes in the list of Councillors Present and the insertion of Councillor L Hughes in the Apologies for the meeting of 12 February, the Minutes be approved as correct records.

P54. MATTERS ARISING – There were no matters arising.

P55. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15 – The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the current Municipal Year.

It was also emphasised that the work programme was a rolling programme and any Member of this Scrutiny could request an item to be included provided that a Quad of Aims had been submitted to the Scrutiny Committee prior to ensure that it contributed to the strategic aims of the Council.

The submitted report outlined the original Work Programme and requested Members to reconsider the Work Programme to accommodate further issues that needed to be included.

Discussion ensued on the provision of improved signage in the Town Centre being considered by this Scrutiny Committee in September 2015; wheeled bins being emptied on the A66 and bin bags being placed next to those wheeled bins; and issues around the amount of litter on all Darlington's main approach roads

RESOLVED – (a) That the current status of the Work Programme be noted.

(b) That the Work Programme be updated to reflect the decisions of this Scrutiny Committee.

P56. THEATRE HULLABALOO AND CIVIC THEATRE – The Assistant Director, Community Services provided Members with an overview of the current situation in relation to the Civic Theatre and Theatre Hullabaloo funding applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Arts Council respectively.

It was stated that during October 2014, Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) support for a £5m bid had been successful for the Civic Theatre. Theatre Hullabaloo had also been awarded capital investment of £1.5million from Arts Council England at Stage 1 in order to provide a Children’s Theatre adjacent to Darlington’s Civic Theatre.

Members were advised that the Council now owned buildings around the Civic Theatre which would be included in the blue prints for the renovations. All consultants and specialists had now been appointed and were working on final submissions for both projects which had different requirements for both funding streams. Officers had also visited many Theatres across the UK to ascertain the best options for the Civic Theatre

It was noted that the Arts Council submission for Stage 2 would be made in July with the result being announced in November and the Heritage Lottery Fund Stage 2 submission would be made in October/November with the result being announced in Jan/Feb 2016. Works would then commence during Spring/Summer 2016 if a successful outcome was received.

Particular reference was made to the Civic Theatre works which included restoration of the front exterior of the Theatre, the creation of a vaulted bar in the former water tower, more space for public circulation, improved seating and greater comfort for audiences, and better disabled access including a lift. Members were also pleased to note that there were plans for a new education centre and a gallery offering a changing programme of theatre-related exhibitions.

The plans also included major improvements to backstage areas to bring the Theatre up to modern standards and allow it to accommodate larger touring companies and bigger shows.

Discussion ensued on the need for continued national strategic funding and an active programme of events around the Town to keep the concept of the Theatre alive. Members were also keen to keep the heritage of the Theatre alive and were assured that this was an important aspect of the works.

It was also highlighted that regeneration of the whole Parkgate area including Bank Top Station and the Town Centre Fringe was being investigated.

RESOLVED – (a) That the current situation be noted.

(b) That the Civic Theatre restoration works be closely monitored by this Scrutiny Committee.

P57. PUBLIC EVENTS SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP (PESAG) – The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting the findings and recommendations of the Public Events Safety Advisory Group (PESAG) established by Place Scrutiny Committee to contribute to both the promotion and protocol for the Darlington Public Events Safety Advisory Group.

It was stated that the Group had met on four occasions and a wide number of issues had been discussed and considered at those meetings. Contributions had also been received from Durham Police, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, Sadberge Festival Organisers, Friends of North Lodge Park, Darlington Community Carnival, Principal Licensing Officer, Regulatory Services, Traffic Manager, Highways, Events and Programming Manager and Environmental Health Officer, Regulatory Services of the Council.

RESOLVED – That this Scrutiny Committee approves the following recommendations of the Review Group for consideration by Cabinet:-

- (a) That, as PESAG was helpful to the Police, a case should be made to encourage Police funding;
- (b) That PESAG be more widely promoted and publicised by various means including DBC, Police, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Services websites, social media and Darlington Together magazine;
- (c) That a community organisation be encouraged to train community volunteers to manage road closures;
- (d) That the benefits of PESAG be highlighted to all events organisers;
- (e) That a single application for multiple events at one location be submitted with a schedule of events incorporated;
- (f) That a more customer-friendly website be implemented;
- (g) That the Events Manager role be more clearly defined as a facilitator and not to undertake the responsibilities of the Event's Organisers; and
- (h) That provision of an online feedback form be investigated

P58. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – The Retiring Chair, Councillor Dorothy Long, expressed her thanks and gratitude to Officers and Members for their continued support during her office as Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee.

Officers and Members acknowledged the Chair and in doing so conveyed their good wishes and a happy retirement to Councillor Long.
