
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 2014/15

2. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2014/15 and possible review topics and in doing so, we have taken into account the reduced resources available and ensured that, in recommending our work programme to Monitoring and Co-ordination Group, any work we undertake will have demonstrable outcomes and contribute to the work of the Council and its strategic aims and objectives.

Medium Term Financial Plan

3. Again, as with all other Scrutiny Committees, we have been requested to provide a response to Cabinet on its proposals in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2014/15 to 2019/20.
4. We received a presentation giving an overview of the current financial position of the Authority; the anticipated further savings which were required by 2020, over and above the current planned savings; the savings achieved to date; progress on the three key areas which it had been agreed would offer the best prospects of the Council being in a position to continue to serve the public well into the long-term i.e. Building Strong Communities, Spending Wisely and Growing the Economy; what the Council spends its money on; and the significant on-going financial challenges and risks ahead.

Capital Programme

5. Cabinet has also proposed a 2015/16 Capital Programme for consultation, which Place Scrutiny Committee has supported. We were pleased to note the capital provision for the Dolphin Centre, Indoor Market and Advanced Design Fees.

Litter Reduction and Grounds Maintenance

6. Scrutiny received an update on work undertaken as part of the Litter Reduction and Grounds Maintenance project which continues to evolve. We were reminded that as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) a savings target of £600,000 had to be delivered by March 2017.
7. The project combines litter and grounds maintenance with defined outcomes to identify alternative ways of maintaining green and open spaces and to facilitate

behaviour change within the Borough to realise a reduction in the volume of litter and identify alternative means of collection.

8. We were pleased to note that an Engagement Plan based on behaviour change methodology had been developed to assist in changing people's behaviour in relation to litter reduction.
9. We also noted that an audit had been undertaken in Lascelles Ward working with Members, local community leaders, residents and local businesses to identify key issues and concerns. The Council aims to learn what a community could do, was prepared to do and the support required to be able to do it. It was hoped that the outcome would get people to take responsibility for their own neighbourhood, get actively involved and identify what Council support they required.
10. Members noted the Green Footprints Experiment undertaken by Keep Britain Tidy to provide a useful insight into how Darlington residents and visitors responded to a nudge towards responsible litter disposal. Scrutiny looks forward to seeing the final report which would be produced in March 2015.
11. It was also pleasing to note that Groundwork North East had been successful in securing £80,000 from the Rethinking Parks programme, a nationwide project aimed at finding new ways of helping improve and add value to the way urban green spaces are managed.
12. South Park, the Denes and North Park have been identified to trial the initiative as all three parks have received funding from various sources over recent years. The Rethinking Parks initiative will explore new ways of working at these locations in order to ensure the improvements are maintained and improved upon through these difficult times. A key component is to work with Darlington Cares to ensure that the business community will be able to work with the friends groups on a variety of initiatives.
13. Data analysing to identify where the greatest levels of demand are is to be undertaken and an Action Plan is also being developed with local shops and businesses to get their involvement in maintaining and enhancing their local area.

Creative Darlington

14. I reported on Creative Darlington which has been working with a firm of consultants on 'Organisational Development'. The consultants spoke to a wide variety of people and the Interim Report was received on 24 November.
15. The report outlined the situation as it now appeared beginning with the views of existing Board Members some of which found it difficult to give the necessary commitment of time. Opinions as to the role of Creative Darlington were also diverse.
16. The report also included a review of partners, potential partners and funders and the current vision, core purpose and priorities were also examined and subjected to

challenge. The workload of the Creative Darlington Manager was also assessed.

17. The report outlined a series of governance arrangement options and funding opportunities associated with each option and outlined clear recommendations for the future of Creative Darlington.

Combined Authority

18. We received a PowerPoint presentation from the Chief Executive entitled 'A Combined Authority for the Tees Valley building on Strength' to which all members were invited.
19. The presentation outlined the background to a Combined Authority, where we are now and the function and advantages of Tees Valley Unlimited.
20. We discussed the role and powers of a Combined Authority which included being able to compete with regions in the United Kingdom and internationally, effective, timely, decision-making and enabling a new era of joint working, building on our strengths and qualities.
21. It is envisaged that a Combined Authority for the Tees Valley would help to achieve our economic goals and receive greater devolved powers.
22. We were pleased to learn that our role as a Council would be undiminished and that we would continue to agree Darlington's economic strategy and feed into the Tees Valley investment plans and strategies. Members also noted that there would be minimal impact on resources.
23. Scrutiny also noted the importance of Darlington becoming an Integrated Transport Authority.
24. We noted the membership of the Combined Authority and discussed the role that Scrutiny would play.
25. The consultation process and timetable for establishment of the Tees Valley Combined Authority were also outlined.

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