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**OVERVIEW OF PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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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.

**Cycling in the Town Centre**

3. At the meeting of Council held 4 December 2014 Place Scrutiny Committee was requested to conduct a review of cycling in the Pedestrian Heart following an incident which had left a resident hospitalised.
4. Scrutiny Committee met on 5 February where a wide number of issues were discussed and considered.
5. Members heard the views of the public, Darlington Association on Disability, Durham Constabulary and various Cycling Groups.
6. Place Scrutiny Committee made several recommendations to Cabinet and in doing so accepted the use of the Pedestrian Heart, by cyclists, as a component of the cycle route network designed for the Borough and the contribution of that Policy to carbon reduction measures and road safety.
7. Scrutiny Committee was also united in its condemnation of anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre.

**Economic Strategy – Local Enterprise Partnership**

8. Members were pleased to welcome Rory Sherwood-Parkin of Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) who gave a presentation on Supporting Darlington's Economic Growth Strategy.
9. The presentation covered the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Tees Valley Economy, Strategic Economic Plan, Supporting Growth in Darlington and Better Together.

10. Members were informed that there was a history of joint working across the Tees Valley since the mid-1990's in various forms and the central focus and rationale of the Tees Valley LEP was to strive to deliver jobs and economic growth across Tees Valley in both the private and public sectors.
11. It was stated that TVU currently had 30 staff and its main functions were to support economic growth, inward investment, business engagement, economic analysis, skills, funding strategic transport and major strategic projects.
12. In relation to the economy Tees Valley contributed £11bn per annum to the UK economy and was a major hub for chemicals and advanced manufacturing. It was pleasing to note that there were now opportunities in subsea, creative/digital, biologics and energy from waste. The Tees Valley also has the largest exporting port in England with a growing logistics reputation, major innovation and skills centres and a highly skilled workforce.
13. Members were reassured that confidence remains event in the aftermath of the drop in oil prices.
14. An outline was given of the content of the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan which covered local economic growth for the next ten years and was aligned to the European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy, Tees Valley Strategic Infrastructure Plan and the Tees Valley Innovation Strategy.
15. Driving the transition to a high-value, low carbon economy and creating a more diversified and inclusive economy were the two key drivers of the Vision for the Tees Valley Economy.
16. Key growth sectors in Darlington were highlighted as business and professional services, biologics and healthcare, logistics, advanced manufacturing and creative/digital and TVU meet regularly with large companies to provide support and help. TVU also supported Darlington key projects and undertook lobbying for Darlington priorities.
17. Members were also given a presentation by the Council's Economy Manager on the Economic Strategy Annual Monitoring Report, developed in 2012 by Darlington Partnership and the Council, and Economic Strategy Action Plan.
18. Scrutiny was informed that in order to maximise the Council's potential for achieving further economic growth it was essential that its Economic Strategy and the actions contained therein, aligned with the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan and that through working closely with the LEP (Tees Valley Unlimited) with businesses and other agencies, we create the right environment to attract business investment, for companies to set-up, flourish and drive growth in jobs and economic output.
19. The proposal for a Tees Valley Combined Authority focused on economic development, transport, infrastructure and skills to facilitate further collaboration across the Tees Valley, with increased democratic accountability underpinned by

collaboration between the private, public and civil sectors was welcomed.

20. Darlington's Economic Strategy was composed around the four key themes of Place, People, Infrastructure and Business Growth and indications were that Darlington's economy had outperformed regional and national growth trends.

## **Arriva**

21. Members may recall that in July 2012 Place Scrutiny Committee met with Arriva to investigate how commercial bus services within the Borough could be improved, in terms of quality and reach of services, following concerns raised by members of the public.
22. Arriva recently requested a further opportunity to attend Committee to advise Members of measures that had been introduced to alleviate those concerns which included punctuality, driver attitude, cleanliness and condition of buses, pulling away from stops when passengers were running to catch, wheelchair use access, fare pricing and leaving engines running when stationary.
23. We were encouraged to note that Darlington was now top of the league table for punctuality at over 90 per cent, the target for customer complaints was 10 per 100k passengers which Arriva was achieving and the current customer survey indicated overall satisfaction of 93 per cent.
24. We were extremely pleased to note the excellent partnership working that Arriva had in Darlington and of the Smartertravel Award 2015 in the Best Local Sustainable Transport Fund Category for Reinvigorating Bus Services in Darlington.
25. Members also welcomed the initiatives to reduce fares on certain routes, introduction of an Arriva app, the new branding and marketing campaign and the proposed investment in the fleet.
26. We also received a presentation from the Sustainable Transport Manager which highlighted the key issues for the Council including traffic delays, customer experience, improved accessibility and increasing travel by bus.
27. We noted that the Punctuality Improvement Partnership met on a quarterly basis to consider issues including major junction improvement, parking enforcement and planning for disruption.
28. Members were reminded that the Stonebridge road works had been funded by Tees Valley Bus Network to ensure better egress from the town centre and improved customer facilities included new stops, bus shelters and raised and dropped kerbs to alleviate customer concerns.
29. Members welcomed the advertising campaigns by Arriva and the initiatives to meet the needs of disabled people.

30. We were informed of the next steps which included a review of community transport, new customer management system (CMS), re-issue of concessionary fare passes, new software for timetables and smart ticketing to be launched in summer.

### **Public Events Safety Advisory Group**

31. The Review Group has drafted final recommendations which will be considered by Scrutiny at its next meeting.
32. Once approved we will forward our recommendations to Cabinet for consideration.

### **Performance Management**

33. Members received a further presentation from the Head of Organisational Planning on the Performance Management Framework which included statistical data around the key performance indicators that were relevant to this Scrutiny Committee.
34. Scrutiny was pleased to note that Darlington was out-performing the rest of the North East in relation of overall employment rate but had levelled off in England.
35. In relation to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) Claimants, Darlington is the same as the rest of the North East and maps the England rate and, whilst there are still gaps between all Wards, all Wards have actually fallen.
36. We are on target to meet the creation of 125 apprenticeships for Council residents and Darlington Partnership is looking to include other service industries.

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