

## PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 February 2015

**PRESENT** – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Cossins, Donohue, L Hughes, Lawton and EA Richmond. (6)

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Baldwin, Carson, Culley and Harman. (4)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – ( )

### **Representing Outside Organisations -**

Rory Sherwood-Parkin, Tees Valley Unlimited, John Rochford and Nick Knox, Arriva.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth, Steve Petch, Place Strategy Manager, Owen Wilson, Economy Manager, Sue Dobson, Sustainable Transport Manager, Sharon Raine, Head of Organisational Planning, Lucy Humphreys, Policy and Performance Officer and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

**P41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**P42. MINUTES** – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Scrutiny Committee held on 18 December 2014 and 9 January 2015.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be approved as correct records.

**P43. MATTERS ARISING** – There were no matters arising.

**P44. TEES VALLEY UNLIMITED LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP – (1) TEES VALLEY UNLIMITED** – Mr Rory Sherwood-Parkin of Tees Valley Limited gave a presentation to Members detailing the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Tees Valley Economy, Strategic Economic Plan, Supporting Growth in Darlington and Better Together.

Scrutiny was 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 the Tees Valley in both the private and public sectors. TVU currently employed 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.

Members were pleased to note that the 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. Members were reassured that confidence remains event in the aftermath of the drop in oil prices. 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.

We received an outline 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.

It was noted that 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. 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.

Discussion ensued on the strategy for the chemical industry, in particular carbon capture and storage and shale gas, the need to promote the ethos of Live Work Play in the North East, excellent work done by Foundation for Jobs and Employment Officer based at Red hall to help people into employment, apprenticeships now offered to people of any age and the need to ensure cultural contribution to the economy through various media such as Civic Theatre, Theatre Hulabaloo, Brick Train and the Railway Museum.

Members also reinforced the importance of the transport infrastructure of Darlington to ensure A1 access, and north-south and east-west connections.

**RESOLVED** – That the thanks of this Committee be extended to Rory Sherwood-Parkin for his informative presentation.

**(2) Darlington Borough Council Economic Strategy Annual Monitoring Report** – The Director of Economic Growth submitted a report (previously circulated) briefing Scrutiny Committee on the Economic Strategy Annual Monitoring Report and sought and seeking views on the 2015/2016 Economic Strategy Action Plan (also previously circulated). A PowerPoint presentation by the Economy Manager accompanied the report.

The submitted report highlighted that the Economic Strategy 2012-2026 was approved in September 2012 and contained a commitment to annually review and assess progress against the targets. Darlington's Economic Strategy and Annual Action Plans are the means by which Darlington will make the case to focus financial support made available through the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, Government Departments and other funding mechanisms on priority schemes, programmes and projects designed to facilitate economic growth.

It was stated that Darlington had many excellent transport links and details of current and planned investments, including Central Park, Town Centre Developments and the regeneration of the Bank Top Railway Station were highlighted in the report.

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Committee were advised that, in order to maximise potential for achieving further economic growth, it was important that Darlington's Economic Strategy aligned with the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan. Through close working with the LEP, businesses and other agencies the right environment was created to attract business investment and economic output.

Tees Valley Combined Authority proposals focused on economic development, transport, infrastructure and skills and facilitated further collaboration across the Tees Valley.

Reference was made to the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), agreed by Government in July 2014, which sets out ambitions to generate an increase of £1Bn in gross value added (GVA), 25,000 new jobs in the Tees Valley and growth of around 6,250 net new jobs expected in Darlington.

Details were supplied of key sources of funding and activities which included local growth fund, European Social Funding and European Regional Development Fund.

It was reported that Darlington's Economic Strategy was composed around four key themes of Place, People, Infrastructure and Business Growth and further detailed information was contained in the Darlington Economic Strategy Annual Monitoring Report including key projects for 2015/16.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be received.

(b) That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Economy Manager for his informative presentation.

**P45. BUS NETWORK – (1) ARRIVA** – Pursuant to Minute P15(2)/Sep/12, Mr John Rochford and Mr Nick Knox of Arriva gave a PowerPoint presentation in relation to its current position within Darlington in respect of all the areas of concern that were raised in 2012 by residents.

The issues raised included punctuality, driver's attitude, cleanliness/condition of buses, wheelchair access, fare prices, timetable issues and running of engines when stationary.

Members 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.

**RESOLVED** – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to Mr Rochford and Mr Knox of Arriva for their informative presentation.

**(2) LOCAL MOTION** – Members 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.

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Scrutiny was informed of the Punctuality Improvement Partnership which met on a quarterly basis to consider issues including major junction improvement, parking enforcement and planning for disruption. It was reiterated 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.

Members raised concerns that drivers were leaving buses with engines running whilst attending the Arriva offices on Tubwell Row and questioned whether fares would be reduced due to lower fuel costs.

It was confirmed that Arriva currently had no plans to reinstate some disbanded services although in 2013 some early morning journeys had been replaced.

Scrutiny Committee was impressed with the excellent partnership working between Arriva and the Council to provide an excellent bus service for Darlington and was 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. 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 were welcomed by Members.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the thanks of this Committee be extended to the Sustainable Transport Manager for her informative presentation.

(b) That the congratulations of this Committee on the Smartertravel Award be noted.

**P46. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT QUARTER 2** – The Head of Organisational Planning gave a PowerPoint Presentation detailing the revised approach to performance management which has been adopted and allows for an assessment of the achievement of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed outcomes and the performance of service delivery by the Council.

The presentation included statistical data around the key performance indicators that were relevant to this Scrutiny Committee.

Members were 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 and 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.

Members also noted that Darlington was on target to meet the creation of 125 apprenticeships for Council residents and Darlington Partnership was looking to include other service industries.

**RESOLVED** – That the thanks of this Committee be extended to the Head of Organisational Planning for her informative presentation.

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**P47. WORK PROGRAMME – 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 current status of the Local Plan which has now been deferred to Summer.

**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.

**P48. CREATIVE DARLINGTON BOARD** – Submitted – The Minutes of the meeting of the Creative Darlington Board meeting held on 9 December 2015.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be received.

**P49. PUBLIC EVENTS SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP (PESAG)** – Submitted the Minutes of the meetings of the PESAG Review Group held on 4 December 2014 and 12 February 2015.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

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