

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 June 2014

PRESENT – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Carson, Cossins, Harman, L. Hughes, Lawton, EA Richmond and Wright. (8)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin, Donoghue and Grundy. (3)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Coultas and Culley. (2)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Ian Thompson, Assistant Director, Community Services, Ken Major, Traffic Manager, O. Wilson, Economy Manager and Andrew Casey, Head of Highway Network Management and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Councillors Harman, Long and Wright declared an interest as they lived in Resident Parking Zone areas.

P2. TO CONSIDER TIMINGS OF MEETINGS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014/15 - RESOLVED – That meetings of this Scrutiny Committee be held at 9.30 a.m. for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2014/15.

P3. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 9 April 2014.

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

P4. MATTERS ARISING – In relation to Minute P49(d)/Apr/14, the Economy Manager advised Scrutiny that under the current Residents' Parking Zone (RPZ) Scheme a daily waiver was available, at a fee of £5 per day, by residents' contacting the Town Hall. The charge was to ensure that the RPZ's were controlled and managed correctly. Following consultation a new additional 'longer term' parking waiver for contractors working in the Town Centre and within RPZ's had been introduced. Charges for the 'longer term' parking waiver have been set at a level intended to avoid misuse of the scheme and to cover administration and enforcement costs. The charges are £50 for a 13 week waiver, £90 for a 26 week waiver and £150 for a 52 week waiver. Contractors displaying a waiver in their vehicle will be able to park on residents' bays, pay and display bays and double yellow lines.

It was also stated that there had been a mixed response to the visitors' permit scheme. All RPZ's have unrestricted areas which are taken up by commuters although this was being reviewed in 2016/17. A pilot was proposed in two or three zones for six months and then a review will be undertaken and tweaking of the scheme if necessary. People had also been known to sell visitor RPZ's to commuters. It was also confirmed that carers and health visitors dispensation was being investigated.

P5. SCRUTINY – WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15 – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources 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 need to bring to a close the Cultural Review which had continued to evolve whilst following and monitoring the alternative delivery options for cultural services within the Town. It was reported that whilst the Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the Civic Theatre had not been successful, the Council had been asked to re-submit its bid.

It was also stated a final meeting of the Markets Review Group should be held to consider its findings and recommendations; and a PESAG Review Group was to be established

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.

P6. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT 2004 - NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN – The Director of Economic Growth submitted a report (previously circulated) which detailed the actions, performance tasks and intervention criteria within the Network Management Plan (the Plan) approved by Cabinet on 3rd February, 2009.

The submitted report stated that the Plan set out what the Council will do to try and limit congestion on the network including co-ordinating work of statutory undertakers and communicating with the public when works affect major roads in Darlington. A new system was now in place that ensured faster response to any issues around works being done and residents could see live on the Council's website where road works are being undertaken.

It was reported that the Department of Transport looked at trends and that most impact on Darlington was due to the Local Plan, step changes were being done to 2026 and traffic data over several years was available. The Plan took a bigger part in the Local Plan and if a new site of 100 houses was built a breakdown of expected transport hits would be available.

Officers had a trips model which estimated impact on the network and enabled movement predictions. As the Council has the technology and strategies in place application to the Local Growth Fund can be made.

It was confirmed that 'trips' were a mixture of vehicles and pedestrians although congestion was usually cars; most developments had access to bus, cycle and pedestrian routes; and pedestrian surveys were done quarterly.

Members were informed that there were approximately 40 automatic count sites which relayed information 24/7 although it was acknowledged that some cycles were so light that they did not always register; the Locomotion Survey was being undertaken soon which was one of the best indicators of trips; and the Council had an excellent relationship with Arriva.

Middlesbrough was looking at the relationship between pedestrians and the movement of traffic for all four Tees Valley Authorities, especially the length of time a pedestrian has to cross which is currently 19 seconds but can be increased to 38 seconds. It was also stated that it was considered that more time should be devoted to 'red' to allow elderly to cross safely. Reference was made to other countries that operated a countdown system and it was confirmed that this was being looked at by the Department of Transport.

It was reported that the development being undertaken at Stonebridge was due to extra movement of traffic from the Department for Education, the new cinema complex, Central Park new housing, CPI building and other developments. Members were advised that if the alterations had not taken place the area would be in lockdown, traffic signals ensured flow of traffic and less congestion.

Park and ride systems were investigated several years ago and deemed not to be commercially viable for Darlington. It was suggested that the Deep Ocean work place travel plans, whereby staff use the Football Stadium car park and travel the remainder of the way to work by bus provided by employers, be looked at.

RESOLVED – That the Project Progress Report be noted.

P7. LITTER REDUCTION AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE PROJECT – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) on the Litter and Grounds Maintenance Project currently being undertaken to explore ways of working across the Borough to involve individuals, groups, businesses and visitors in improving the appearance of the Borough by reducing the amount of litter and participating in appropriate grounds maintenance activities.

Scrutiny were advised that the Project had been developed due to the continued financial demands faced by the Council and supported all three conditions of success for Darlington. Key partners in the project team include Groundwork Northeast, City of York Council and three elected Members to provide an insight into issues faced by Ward Councillors who as community leaders are important to encourage residents' involvement.

The project scoping identified three strands, runs over two years and involves three distinct phases of data gathering and identifying good practice; implementation of agreed Action Research Projects and evaluation of the pilot projects; and rollout of identified projects.

Discussions ensued on the need to make a saving of £600k by 2017, involvement of small groups of the communities to look after small pockets of land as land that it looked after is respected but if it looks run-down it will have a different effect on people's perspective.

It was also stated that school should educate children on the cost of litter and arrange litter picks within their area; colleges should be encouraged to have litter policies and businesses should take responsibility for their own shop frontages.

Reference was made to accessing funding streams for groups of litter pickers and some areas of Town being worse than others; Carmel College and Hummersknott Academy employing a person to litter pick once the children have left resulting in no residents' complaints; and the 6th Form litter picking Stanhope Park.

Scrutiny commented that the positives needed to be celebrated and good behaviour rewarded as well as naming and shaming of fly tippers. It was also noted that since the introduction of wheeled bins back lanes were now cleaner although there had been a rise in small tips i.e. one black bag.

RESOLVED – (a) That Place Scrutiny Committee endorse the activities within the Project.

(b) That Members encourage the involvement of all elected Members to promote participation by residents and businesses in each Ward.

(c) That an update regarding litter, grounds maintenance and wheeled bins introduction be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee in six months.

P8. MARKETS REVIEW GROUP – Submitted – The notes of the meeting of the Markets Review Group held on 23 April 2014.

Discussion ensued on the need to establish Darlington as a market town destination again and for clear recommendations to be made by the Review Group. Scrutiny Committee acknowledged that although internet shopping had impacted on Darlington there were some short-term projects that could be implemented.

It was also suggested that the Market Hall building could also be utilised for activities such as café space, entertainment and specialised trades.

RESOLVED – (a) That the notes be approved as a correct record.

(b) That a final meeting be arranged to give consideration to the findings and recommendations of the Markets Review Group prior to submission to Cabinet.

P9. CULTURAL REVIEW GROUP – Submitted – The notes of the meeting of the Cultural Review Group held on 22 April 2014.

Discussion ensued on the need to have a further meeting to consider the Group's findings and consider the status of the Group.

RESOLVED – (a) That the notes be approved as a correct record.

(b) That a final meeting be arranged to give consideration to the findings and recommendations of the Cultural Review Group prior to submission to Cabinet.