

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6th September, 2012

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

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin, Harman, McEwan and E.A. Richmond. (4)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Coultas, Curry, Kelley and McNab. (4)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – John Anderson, Assistant Director, Policy and Regeneration, Head of Strategy and Commissioning, Simon Houldsworth, Principal Policy Officer, Sue White, Economic Regeneration Officer and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

P10. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 14th June, 2012.

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

P11. MATTERS ARISING – Pursuant to Minute P4(c)/Jun/12, the Assistant Director advised Members that there was a funding opportunity through Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and that Darlington needed to either update its current BT exchange or improve Central Park. It was also stated that there was an Action Plan within the Economic Strategy for a Digital Strategy and that a feasibility scope was required. Members expressed concerns that social inclusion needed to be encompassed as part of the Digital Strategy. The Chair advised Committee that the Broadband issue would be looked at early 2013 jointly with other Scrutiny Committees.

P12. SCRUTINY – WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13 – The Director of 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.

The submitted report outlined those areas where this Scrutiny Committee had previously identified it would like to focus its work over the next Municipal Year namely, Civil Parking Enforcement, Town Centre Fringe, Local Development Framework, Housing Strategy, Economic Strategy and Transformation Projects.

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 need to be included.

Members were also requested to give particular consideration to a number of items in relation to financial advice/guidance to local small businesses; business plan for the town's markets and community transport solutions which have been formally requested to be included on the Work Programme by a member of this Scrutiny Committee.

It was also stated that the Quad of Aims had been approved by the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group for Arriva and approval was sought to the Terms of Reference.

Discussion ensued on the need for a Special meeting of Scrutiny Committee to be held in November to give consideration to the Local Development Framework (LDF); with regard to Project Vane a decision on the application made to the Regional Growth Fund, being imminent; the relocation of the Borough Art Collection to Crown Street Library; and the monitoring of the results of time-trials of a number of services provided by Arriva.

It was stated that, in relation to the Car parking Strategy, a Consultant's report had been received which needed to be taken into consideration in conjunction with the Town Centre Regeneration. Members were also advised that the Town Centre Fringe would be considered at a future meeting of Scrutiny.

The Chair stated that, as Carbon Management had not been considered by this Committee for some time, it should be placed on the Work Programme and that the newly appointed Creative Darlington Manager could be invited to a future meeting of Scrutiny Committee.

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

(b) That the submitted Terms of Reference in respect of Arriva, be approved.

(c) That arrangements be made for a special meeting of Scrutiny to be held in November to give consideration to the Local Development Framework.

(d) That, as a Review Group of this Scrutiny Committee has already investigated Financial Advice/Guidance to Local Small Businesses and the information requested can be gained by briefings and the internet, this item be not placed on the Work Programme.

(e) That in relation to Business Plan for the Town's Markets this item be placed on the Work Programme and a Task and Finish Review Group be established to commence in January 2013.

(f) That as discussions are on-going with regard to Community Transport Solutions this item be not placed on the Work Programme.

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

P13. ECONOMIC STRATEGY – Pursuant to Minute P14/Jan/12, the Director of Place submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking Members' views on the key messages contained within the Economic Strategy which had been developed in consultation with local businesses through the Darlington Partnership.

The Strategy, based around the four themes of place, people, infrastructure and business conditions, focused on the issues and actions that businesses have indicated are important to the development of Darlington's local economy and will be presented to the Board of the Darlington Partnership on 12th September, 2012. The Strategy had been written for a business audience

and was not intended to replace other strategies, it was to support them. Members were advised that there was more detailed documentation being prepared behind every Action within the Plan which considered timeframes, milestones and person/body responsible for the Action. This information would be made available to Members once completed.

Discussion ensued on the need to assist the unemployed find employment, particularly in the low-employment Wards of the Borough and need to ensure that public sector employees remain in Darlington.

It was stated that following an extensive consultation exercise positive feedback on the Strategy had been received from business.

A Member requested that Cummins Engineering should be mentioned within the Strategy and that there was a need to find Darlington's Unique Selling Point (USP) to ensure economic growth, however skills, demographics and locations varied between different businesses' and sectors.

RESOLVED – (a) That Officers report further the Economic Strategy Action Plans for detailed Scrutiny.

(b) That this Scrutiny Committee be given the opportunity to look in more detail at other aspects of the Strategy in relation to economic health, for example the role of the public sector and the activities of mutuals co-operatives and other enterprise models.

(c) That the views of this Scrutiny Committee be forwarded as part of the consultation with regard to the Economic Strategy.

P14. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION – PUBLIC CONSULTATION – The Director of Place submitted a report (previously circulated) that provided Members with the background to the recent consultation and participation process relating to the future of the Town Centre and highlighted the emerging themes that were developing.

The submitted report outlined the comprehensive consultation exercise that had been undertaken with members of the public regarding future opportunities within the Town Centre. A developer's workshop was proposed for late September which would inform the decision making process in terms of future planning of the Town Centre in the Local Plan, the future use of Council land and property and the public good that could be delivered. Key themes identified from initial consultation events were highlighted within the submitted report.

Members of the Committee were given the opportunity to engage in the Regeneration Game, a consultation tool developed to make complex issues that need to be considered accessible.

Discussion ensued on the consultation being extended into schools as many young people had a view on what they required within the Town Centre, the need to listen to the views of the public in relation to any future Town Centre developments, provision of a bus/coach station, requirements of the outdoor market traders and vehicle parking provision for businesses in Skinnergate.

RESOLVED – (a) That the comments made at this Scrutiny Committee be taken forward as part of the consultation exercise.

P15. POLICY REVIEW – REVIEW OF PROGRESS ON POLICY REVIEW ITEMS (1) REFUSE COLLECTION (WHEELED BINS) REVIEW GROUP - Submitted – The Notes of the meeting of the Refuse Collection Review Group held on 16th July, 2012.

Concerns were raised by a Member on the size of the proposed wheeled bins for single-person households and the absence of a choice for those householders.

RESOLVED – (a) That the notes be received.

(b) That the progress of the Review Group be noted.

(c) That the relevant Officer be requested to advise whether the opportunity still exists to purchase smaller wheeled bins and if there would be any cost savings.

(2) ARRIVA REVIEW GROUP – Submitted – The Notes of the meeting of the Arriva Review Group held on 13th July, 2012.

RESOLVED – (a) That the notes be received.

(b) That the progress of the Review Group be noted.
