

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 April 2014

PRESENT – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Carson, Cossins, Donoghue, Harman, L. Hughes, Lawton, EA Richmond and Wright. (9)

APOLOGIES – Councillor Baldwin and Grundy. (2)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – (0)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Bill Westland, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services, Steve Petch, Head of Strategy and Commissioning, Sharon Raine, Head of Organisational Planning, Peter Roberts, Consultant – Sustainable Community Strategy and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P43. WELCOME – The Chair formally welcomed Councillor Donoghue as a new Member to Place Scrutiny Committee and expressed her pleasure that Councillors Lawton and Richmond were in attendance following recent illness.

P44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

P45. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Scrutiny Committee held on 6 and 27 February 2014.

RESOLVED – That,

with the re-wording of the second sentence in paragraph five on Page three to read 'Members were assured that the new economic regeneration structure encompassed a tourism aspect although there is no dedicated Tourism Officer.'

and

with the re-wording of the second sentence in paragraph two on Page two to read 'Darlington had to attract high skilled jobs in order to ensure sufficient work for low earners to keep the economy thriving and in order to achieve that vision it was important to measure what was wanted to get the best for Darlington.'

in relation to the Minutes of 27 February 2014, the Minutes be approved as correct records.

P46. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY – The Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) which presented a working draft of a revised Sustainable Community Strategy.

Members have already commented on an updated version of the One Darlington: Perfectly Placed vision in advance of the preparation of the revised Sustainable Community Strategy document (Minute P42/Feb/14 refers).

The draft document incorporated the Vision on a Page and explained the context in which the plan had been prepared. It also described the three conditions which had been identified to enable Darlington to be able to deliver the priority outcomes with the limited resources likely to be available – Build Strong Communities, Spend Every Pound Wisely and Grow the Economy and provided the headlines underpinning each outcome.

It was again reiterated that the document was a working draft and further developments and refinements were currently being undertaken before final Council approval on 9 May 2014. Members were invited to contribute to its development in the areas of specific interest to this Scrutiny Committee.

The Consultant – Sustainable Community Strategy advised Members that the role and priorities of the Local Strategic Partnership were now within the Strategy and that pages 13 and 14 had been completely redesigned and now encompassed a statement regarding tackling plans together with a diagram outlining delivery plans.

In relation to the eight outcomes within the Strategy, it was highlighted that there was a need to map out the connection between the outcomes and the work programmes of the Local Strategic Partnership who all contribute to the delivery of the outcomes through the work programmes they put in place.

It was suggested that the outcomes relevant to Place Scrutiny Committee were more businesses and more jobs, more people caring for our environment and enough support for people when needed.

Particular reference was made to the need to include Darlington's cultural and historical aspects as Darlington's USP was the Stockton to Darlington railway and steam railway heritage was a massive worldwide tourist attraction. It was stressed that heritage was now coming to the fore and it needed to be developed as an economy for the future.

Members were keen to ensure that the correct balance of skills of the workforce supported the economic growth of Darlington and that employment opportunities were not reliant solely on Central Park which encompassed sub-sea engineering, biologics and digital business technology.

It was also suggested that there should be a reference to education providers as Darlington had good schools and excellent exam results.

It was suggested that better wording or an explanation be used in relation to Gross Value Added (GVA) as many people were unaware of the meaning of GVA.

RESOLVED – (a) That the information relating to engineering, tourism and the railway and steam heritage, contained in the section headed Darlington's DNA, be expanded.

(b) That details highlighted at (a) above be included within the business section of the SCS as a USP.

(c) That Members of this Scrutiny Committee continue to contribute to the on-going development of the document.

P47. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND POSSIBLE LINKS WITH FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME – Pursuant to Minute P39(b)/Feb/14, the Head of Organisational Planning gave a presentation on the Performance Management Framework (PMF) currently being developed and outlined how the indicators aligned to the strategies and outcomes of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

It was stated that the detail of all indicators needed to be measured and that the Council had to understand what was being delivered 'on the ground'.

It was reported that the PMF would assist Members in developing their work programmes over the next Municipal Year thereby ensuring that work undertaken will reflect the strategic aims of the Council.

Members were advised that work is being undertaken on the high level indicators which had been devised as a set of key indicators to measure performance. The high level indicators were strategic indicators which include all the Partners and would be used to assess the outcomes of the Strategy.

A Member proposed two new indicators - the number of young people that could communicate in two languages and the number of girls studying engineering. However it was stated that the ability to measure is difficult and that Officers would need to investigate. It was also suggested that the number of apprentices that gain employment be also included.

Discussion ensued on why Darlington lacked so many apprenticeships and what could be done to improve the situation and concerns were expressed at the deprivation levels in some Wards.

The Head of Organisational Planning assured Members that the indicators would show if Darlington was going in the right direction and flag any issues which would be included on Members Work Programme for further investigation. It was stressed that high level indicators would take a while to move although low level indicators would give a better idea of movement.

RESOLVED – That the Head of Organisational be thanked for her interesting and informative presentation.

P48. SCRUTINY – WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14 – 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.

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 Strategy, Town Centre Regeneration, Local Development Framework, Carbon Management and Economic Strategy.

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.

Discussion ensued on an update being due in relation to Litter Reduction and Grounds Maintenance and a brief report on the introduction of wheeled bins to be submitted to the meeting of this Committee scheduled for October

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.

P49. REGULATORY SERVICES – The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services gave a PowerPoint presentation to Members providing an overview of the Role of Regulatory Services and how it integrated in the Economic Growth Department.

Members were advised that Regulatory Services supported and protected public health and safety, the natural and built environment and economic growth.

It was stated that The Regulators Code, which increased focus on working with businesses, was introduced in April 2014 and put businesses' need for clarity, transparency and a risk-based approach at the heart of the regulatory system. Darlington Council complied with the Better Regulation Delivery Officer (BRDO) national priority regulatory outcomes for local authorities and followed the DBC policy covering enforcement activity in the Place Group which is designed to ensure transparent and accountable enforcement action is taken where needed.

Environmental Health Services included the Food Hygiene Rating System which supported good food businesses; Advice on business risks which provided an advisory service to all relevant businesses of potential risks; Business Start-up Advice as part of the Development Management's One Stop Shop; and Public Event Safety Advisory Group (PESAG) which was supportive group with no statutory powers that offered an advice service to event organisers to ensure a safe event.

Development management comprised the One Stop Shop, a pre-application evaluation of a developer's proposals; and Building control which operated in a competitive environment on a job by job basis.

Private Sector Housing incorporated the Landlord Accreditation and Forum which built partnerships with landlords who want to meet a good standard, reducing empty homes which reduced the risks associated with market failure and encouraged investment and provided employment for builders; and Warm up North which created employment opportunities and supported local businesses.

Licensing included the licensing of premises to contribute to the evening economy of Darlington; Pavement Café Policy and Conditions which set out clear standards to ensure safe and effective operation; and Taxi licensing.

Parking regulation ensured that traffic moved freely and parking spaces and loading bays were not abused.

Trading Standards supported economic growth by investigating the sale of counterfeit goods; examining unsafe merchandise and removing it from sale; and regulating animal movement and animal feed.

The Assistant Director, Regulatory Services advised Scrutiny that Flood Risk and Emergency Planning were not included within the presentation but were within the remit of Regulatory Services.

RESOLVED – (a) That the thanks of this Committee be extended to the Assistant Director, Regulatory Services for his informative presentation.

(b) That this Scrutiny Committee notes that regulation was supportive of business in Darlington and is essential to promote, develop and maintain the local economy.

(c) That this Scrutiny Committee wishes to undertake a Task and Finish Review on PESAG and a Quad of Aims be drafted accordingly.

(d) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee outlining the current position for the provision of RPZ's visitors and trade waivers.

(e) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of this Scrutiny on Flood Risk and Emergency Planning.

P50. MARKETS REVIEW GROUP – Submitted – The notes of the meeting of the Markets Review Group held on 13 March 2014.

Discussion ensued on the use of the parking and loading bays around the Indoor Market, views expressed at the recent Town Centre Conference, the extent of refurbishment works required and the aspirations of the traders within the Indoor Market.

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

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