

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12th January, 2012

PRESENT – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Carson, Cossins, Harman, Lawton, Lewis and E.A. Richmond. (7)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Baldwin, L. Hughes, and Wright. (3)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Kelley and D.A. Lyonette and Matthew Snedker, 20's Plenty Campaign. (3)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Richard Alty, Director of Place, David Winstanley, Assistant Director, Highways, Design and Projects, Elizabeth Davison, Assistant Director, Finance, Steve Petch, Head of Place, Strategy and Commissioning and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Councillor Long declared an interest as a Board Member of Theatre Hullabaloo.

P16. SPEED MANAGEMENT REVIEW GROUP – The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) detailing the findings and recommendations of the Speed Management Review Group established to seek a range of views as to the impact of 20mph speed limits within the Borough.

Matthew Snedker of the 20's Plenty Campaign thanked Scrutiny Committee for listening and investigating 20mph limits within the Borough and requested clarification on a number of points within the report.

Discussion ensued on the consultation process undertaken and financial implications when proposing to introduce 20mph limits within the Borough, development of the next Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Place Scrutiny Committee's involvement in that process, the current coverage of 20mph areas within the Borough and Darlington's road safety statistics.

RESOLVED – That this Scrutiny Committee endorses the conclusions and that the following recommendations of the Speed Management Review Group be forwarded to Cabinet:-

- (a) Darlington Borough Council continues to support the introduction of 20 mph zones or limits where appropriate and continues to deliver schemes based on evidence within the available resources.
- (b) Areas be prioritised using evidence from road casualty/speed data and information from School Travel Plans but also general environmental impact and quality of life issues especially with regard to encouraging cycling and walking.
- (c) Community Speed Watch be promoted and encouraged.
- (d) That the work undertaken by 'Twenty's Plenty' be applauded and they be encouraged to promote a culture of driving at 20mph and to work closely with Community Speed

Watch to discourage speeding within the Borough.

- (e) Publicity be undertaken to highlight the achievements in casualty reduction and encourage the public to keep accident statistics low.
- (f) Area based solutions be specifically developed.
- (g) That Place Scrutiny Committee monitors the recommendations arising out of this review and takes them into consideration during scrutiny of the next Local Transport Plan.

P17. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP - The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) detailing the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Review Group established by Place Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise those saving proposals contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which were under the remit of Place Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair introduced the report and referred Members to the three meetings held to scope the budget proposals, consider the proposals and consider the Vision for the Arts.

The Director of Place advised Members of the current position in relation to Cockerton Library and clarified the issues raised at the meeting of the Group held on 9th December, 2011. A Member reported that the Communities Team were undertaking an Impact Assessment of users of Cockerton Library and that a meeting had been organised to establish a Friend's Group of the Library. Following a request that groups and organisations be approached for volunteers Members were advised that Evolution, a brokering service, currently had a wide range of volunteers for library services.

Discussion ensued on CCTV provision within the Borough and to alternative sources of funding currently being investigated to keep cameras active.

With regard to Vision for the Arts the Chair wished to place on record her thanks to Darlington for Culture for the work undertaken on the Vision for the Arts.

Discussion ensued on the importance of the Arts for the viability of the Town, the work currently being undertaken to locate alternative venues for Arts and Arts provision, negotiations currently being held to find alternative venues for current users of the Arts Centre and the possibility of extending the use of the building to businesses.

RESOLVED – (a) Bearing in mind Darlington's poor position in a range of measures of library provision, including being the worst in the country for its number of service points per head of population, and given the importance of libraries to disadvantaged groups in times of economic recession, this Scrutiny Committee cannot endorse the closure of Cockerton Library until the following solutions have been pursued:-

- (i) That schools and Job Centre Plus be approached to determine if a contribution to the Library Service could be made.
 - (ii) That Legal Services be requested to confirm that the Assessment of Local Need had been undertaken correctly.
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- (iii) That a further equalities risk assessment be made in relation to unemployed and low income people (Appendix 19/15 of the submitted report) in relation to social and digital exclusion.
- (iv) That the following governance options be pursued :-
- The Council collaborates with a neighbouring Local Authority to develop a joint-service model of delivery.
 - The Council supports the establishment of a separate Libraries only company or trust as part of a company structure that secures the financial benefits of charitable status;
 - The Council supports the establishment of a wider Leisure and Cultural Trust as part of a company structure that secures the financial benefits of charitable status; and
 - The Council considers supporting the establishment of an 'employee-owned'; model, such as a mutual
- (v) That Members be forwarded information relating to volunteers providing the library service and that any volunteer programme be supervised by professional librarians.
- (vi) That Community Partnerships and Friends Organisations be approached for assistance in running the Library Service.
- (vii) That investigation be undertaken on the effect of local businesses if Cockerton Library were closed.
- (b) The Committee therefore recommends that Cockerton Library continue to be supported in the next financial year.
- (c) That the reduction in criteria for Northumbria in Bloom be investigated.
- (d) That, in relation to CCTV :-
- (i) Members be circulated a list of the CCTV cameras to be turned off; and
 - (ii) Other areas of financing individual cameras be pursued.
- (e) That Officers be thanked for clarifying the issues raised in relation to the MTFP.
- (f) That Members place on record their thanks to all the Officers who have given their time and attention to all questions directed to them with regard to Cockerton Library.
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In relation to the Vision for the Arts it was

RESOLVED – That Place Scrutiny Committee endorse the conclusions and following recommendations of the Medium Term Financial Plan Review Group and they be submitted to the Special meeting of Resources Scrutiny Committee on 26th January 2012 :

(a) That this Scrutiny Committee endorses the principles outlined in the paper ‘Vision for the Arts’ and is convinced of the argument in favour of building a new Arts Centre in a town centre location as a long term and sustainable solution. It believes that Darlington’s past record as a provider and champion of the arts has worked as a driver of economic regeneration and must not be jeopardised.

This Scrutiny Committee considers that uncertainty remains on the following issues :-

- (i) the possibility of success of the grant application to the Arts Council for the provision of a new Arts Hub:
- (ii) the position regarding the provision and facilitation of arts and cultural activity and the cost of such provision in the intervening period; and
- (iii) any new governance model.

and therefore wishes to monitor the situation closely by the establishment of a Task and Finish Review Group as highlighted at Minute EE11(f(iv))/Sep/11 of the former Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

(b) That a full range of models for the re-development of the Vane Terrace site be pursued.

(c) That the Arts Centre continues to operate on a limited basis in conjunction with partners.

(d) That Members place on record their thanks to all the Officers who have given their time and attention to all questions directed to them with regard to the Arts Centre.
