

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 October 2016

PRESENT – Councillor Carson (in the Chair); Councillors Lyonette, Tostevin and Wright. (4)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Cossins, L Hughes, McEwan, Mills, MR Nicholson, Wallis and York. (7)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Lee and Heather Scott; Middleton St George Parish Councillors Colin Pease and Verna Greenwell; and Mr A Macnab, Clerk to the Parish Council. (4)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – John Anderson, Assistant Director – Economic Initiative; Steve Petch, Place Policy Manager and Lead Officer; and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interests reported at the meeting.

P9. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 1 September, 2016.

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

P10. MATTERS ARISING – There were no matters arising.

P11. WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17 – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2016/17.

Members previously agreed a revision to the Work Programme to enable the Committee to analyse information for each topic area aligning it to the eight outcomes and the three conditions in the Sustainable Community Strategy and relevant performance indicators from the Performance Management Framework.

The Lead Officer referred to the scheduled in the submitted report and provided Members with an updated position in relation to individual items.

Discussion ensued on the impacts on residents following cessation of the mobile library service which it was suggested could be considered at the next meeting of the Libraries Task and Finish Review Group scheduled for 31 October 2016.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be updated to reflect the decisions of this Scrutiny Committee.

P12. DARLINGTON LOCAL PLAN 2016 – 2036: CONSULTATION FEEDBACK AND PREFERRED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LOCATIONS

– The Director of Economic Growth submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting Scrutiny to consider and scrutinise the background to, and progress made, against the Local Plan process timetable prior to seeking Cabinet approval to develop Stage 2 of the Plan. A PowerPoint Presentation accompanied the submitted report.

The submitted report detailed the background to the preparation of a new Local Plan for the Borough and provided an overview of the consultation process and responses (detailed at Annex 1 of the submitted report). The three main methods of consulting a wide variety of people, businesses and interest groups were direct consultation, key stakeholder events and through the use of multimedia.

References were also made to policy issues and development and the Visions, Aims and Objectives of the new Local Plan which will provide the framework for the land allocations, policies and proposals.

It was stated that the proposed new Vision of 'Building our ingenuity, cherishing our quality' would be achieved through the Aims of delivering sustainable development to meet the Borough's needs through a cohesive plan which makes the best use of land and resources; protecting or enhancing the quality of Darlington's built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life; and directing large scale new development to emerging strategic growth zones that could help deliver infrastructure and support clusters of economic activity in the context of the Tees valley Strategic Economic Plan and the Council's Economic Strategy.

Detailed information relating to the specific Aims and Objectives was included in the submitted report under the headings of facilitating economic growth; meeting housing needs; ensuring a well-connected Borough; creating cohesive, proud and healthy communities; protecting and enhancing the countryside and natural environment; and protecting the climate and reducing energy consumption.

Scrutiny Committee also heard the views of Councillors Lee and H Scott, and Middleton St George Parish Councillor Pease.

Discussion and challenge ensued on employment figures of 6,000, which were based on the Tees Valley employment forecasts, and housing figures of 10,000, which would be reviewed as part of Stage 2 of the Plan, being too aspirational. Members also raised concerns over the Government's March 2017 deadline for an approved plan and the penalties that the Council would incur if the deadline was not met.

Concerns were raised regarding the amount of development in surrounding villages and the position relating to individual village Neighbourhood Plans. Officers confirmed that work was ongoing with individual Parish Councils to consider the best approach and methodology.

Members particularly challenged and questioned a map within the Presentation which showed Heighington and Middleton St George villages as potential strategic locations on the same level as larger areas recognised at the North East and North West of the

Town. Officers accepted that this should not be the case and have agreed to amend the map accordingly.

Scrutiny considered the strategic transport infrastructure and Councillor Lee was of the opinion that the potential upgrade of the existing Junction 57 would be preferable to the provision of a Northern Relief Road. Members accepted that both possibilities would be considered although they would realise different outcomes when addressing strategic and local network issues.

Particular concerns were raised that the Strategic Development Locations were driven by developers and not good planning. However, Officers reminded Members of the key role developers have in delivering development and providing relevant evidence to an Examination in Public.

Reference was made to the lack of under graduate provision in Darlington and the discussions being undertaken with Teesside University in relation to the creation of a Science Park within the Central Park Masterplan.

The Assistant Director – Economic Initiative responded to all Members questions and comments.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received.

(b) That an all Member Briefing be held prior to Cabinet scheduled for 8 November 2016.

(c) That Officers be commended for the work undertaken to date on the Local Plan.

(d) That Cabinet is advised that Place Scrutiny Committee endorses the Strategic Vision, Aims and Objectives for establishing policies and proposals within the Local Plan.

(e) That the views of Place Scrutiny Committee be taken into consideration by Cabinet when considering the Local Plan at its meeting on 8 November 2016.
