

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 April, 2017

PRESENT – Councillor Carson (in the Chair); Councillors Cossins, Donoghue, L Hughes, KE Kelly, Lyonette, Tostevin and Wright. (8)

APOLOGIES – Councillors MR Nicholson and York. (2)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – (0)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Dawn Taylor, Principal Officer, Trading Standards and Animal Health and Lead Officer, Andy Casey, Head of Highway Network Management and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

P32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

P33. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 16 February 2017.

RESOLVED – That, with the insertion of Councillor L Hughes in the list of apologies, the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

P34. MATTERS ARISING – There were no matters arising.

P35. CYCLING IN DARLINGTON PEDESTRIAN HEART – Pursuant to Minute 40/Feb/15, the Director of Economic Growth submitted a report (previously circulated) providing an update on actions following Cabinet's decision, in February 2009, to allow cycling in the pedestrianised area of Darlington Town Centre.

This Scrutiny Committee was requested to give further consideration to the impact of cycling within the pedestrianised area as a result of an incident that had occurred. Two of the recommendations of that Committee were that an Attitude Survey be undertaken as part of a monitoring exercise and that a Road Safety Audit also be carried out.

Members were advised that Stockton Borough Council was carrying out the Safety Audit, on behalf of the Council, which is scheduled for completion in June 2017. The Audit is being done by a qualified Road Safety Auditor who has been commissioned to investigate the potential road safety impact of banning cycling in the Town Centre; undertake an assessment of what additional signage could be provided to better inform cyclists of where cycling is allowed; and identify an alternative cycle route around the edge of the Town Centre. It was reported that the results of the Road Safety Audit would be submitted to the meeting of Scrutiny scheduled for 24 August 2017.

Details were provided of the Attitude Survey which was completed in May 2016 by NWA (Norma Wilburn and Associates) Social Research, an independent market research company.

It was stated that 50 per cent of respondents indicated they were in favour of cycling in the Town Centre as opposed to 62 per cent in 2008; the number of respondents against cycling in the Town Centre rose from 36 per cent to 38 per cent in the same period; and there was a significant increase in the number of people who had no opinion.

Respondents who would like restrictions placed on cycling in the Town Centre were provided with a list of potential restrictions with 'no cycling in the Town Centre at all' gaining the highest response. This did however represent a reduction from 58 per cent to 44 per cent compared to the 2008 survey.

Details were also supplied of problems experienced because of people driving or parking cars, vans, lorries and mobility scooters in Darlington Town Centre.

The Attitude Survey continues to indicate that the majority of those offering an opinion are in favour of cycling in the Pedestrian Heart, though the percentage in favour has fallen significantly.

Members were informed that the Department for Transport Practice Guidance was still in operation today and that between 2009 and 2015 the Council had received very few complaints in relation to cycling in the Town Centre. It was also confirmed that the area around Horsemarket and the Dolphin Centre was not included in the Pedestrian Heart.

Following a question it was confirmed that the Attitude Survey had been solely focussed on pedestrians views of cyclists and cyclists were not asked about their views of pedestrians.

Discussion ensued on the Terms of Reference of the Road Safety Audit, which were confirmed as cycling focussed; provision of appropriate street signage and furniture in the Town Centre; unsigned radial routes to the Pedestrian Heart; and availability of cycling parking facilities, namely Sheffield Stands, around the Town Centre and in various Town Centre work places.

Members were also advised that Stockton Borough Council had banned cycling but encountered more issues with buses than Darlington and that a crossing located at Lead Yard Bridge to the path between the Fire and Police Stations had not been provided as it was not Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) compliant to provide a crossing at that point.

RESOLVED – (a) That the findings of the Attitude Survey be noted.

(b) That the progress on the development of the Road Safety Audit be noted.

(c) That the findings of the Road Safety Audit be submitted to the meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 24 August 2017.

P36. MONITORING OUTCOMES FROM THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016-20 – STREET CLEANSING, ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME, LITTER AND GROUND MAINTENANCE — Members undertook a scoping exercise to establish requirements of a detailed report, for Committee’s consideration on 1 June 2017, following the impact of cuts to Street Scene Activities.

The Chair suggested a single item Agenda for 1 June 2017 Scrutiny meeting to focus on feedback and monitoring in relation to Street Scene activities with a further meeting to be arranged to give consideration to grounds maintenance, grass cutting, roundabouts and parks at the end of June.

Discussion ensued on the issues Members would like further information on which included statistical information, both regional and national, relating to Enforcement of Fly Tipping and Environmental Crime covering the period from the last three years to the current date; statistical information on litter bins (including dog waste bins if applicable and bins located on trunk roads around the Borough) to include frequency of emptying, hot spots where litter is more prevalent and provision of replacement bins i.e. could larger bins be provided in known litter hot spots; and the number and type of formal complaints received from the public both before and after the budget cuts.

Members also requested details of the programme of chewing gum removal around the Town Centre and a quick refresh on the Waste Contract at the Household Recycling Centre.

It was also agreed that details be requested on the number of service requests received and the response times to those requests and the work of the Street Champions, including mobilising traders to clean up litter from their own shop fronts and education and awareness training around litter.

References were also made to the level of use of the Household Waste Recycling Centre, social media requests, examples of other local authorities using companies for enforcement of littering and Darlington’s enforcement statistics to include a breakdown on areas of the Borough.

RESOLVED – (a) That a detailed report covering the requested areas be submitted to the next meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 1 June 2016.

(b) That details be provided on grounds maintenance, to include grass cutting, roundabouts and parks, be submitted to a special meeting of this Scrutiny.

(c) That a Task and Finish Review be undertaken on private enforcement following the Summer recess.

P37. 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 within the Performance Management Framework.

The Chair and Officers referred to the schedule in the submitted report and provided Members with an updated position in relation to individual items where possible.

Discussion ensued on provision of performance management and performance indicator information; car park strategy progress; and the need for an annual update on Blue Badge monitoring.

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

P38. CREATIVE DARLINGTON BOARD – Submitted – The Minutes of the meeting (previously circulated) of the Creative Darlington Board held 6 February 2017 which provided updates on various topics including an article to be placed in the March 2017 edition of One Darlington Magazine, entitled Culture by Numbers, detailing how various organisations, creative enterprises and services are delivered to support an active arts scene; the work of the Durham Music Service in Darlington; current activity and development work of Theatre Hullabaloo; the Civic Theatre/Hippodrome’s work with children and young people; work and role of Culture Bridge North East including the national, regional, Tees Valley and local context of its work; working together to benefit children and young people in the Borough; Creative Darlington organised meeting to consider commissioning services for children and young people in Darlington and those providing cultural services including organisation in Darlington, Tees Valley and the North East; and the Creative Darlington Brand.

Discussion ensued on a visit to The Bridge, Hullaballoon and the Hippodrome and a conducted tour of the Head of Steam to possibly include a meeting of Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be received.

P39. DARLINGTON LOCAL PLAN 2016-2036 HIGHLIGHT REPORT 10 –The Director of Economic Growth submitted Highlight Report 10 (previously circulated) outlining the progress; governance; key tasks and milestones; and risks in delivery of the Local Plan 2016 - 2036.

The Chair provided Committee with an updated position on the issues detailed in the highlight report.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.
