

**PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

1 February 2018

**PRESENT** – Councillors Carson (in the Chair), Cossins, Donoghue, Lyonette, Marshall, Tostevin and Wright. (7)

**APOLOGIES** – Councillor L Hughes. (1)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE –**

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Stephen Wiper, Creative Darlington Manager; Dawn Taylor, Principal Officer (Trading Standards and Animal Health) and Lead Officer; and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

**P34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – There were no declarations of interests reported at the meeting.

**P35. MINUTES** – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Scrutiny Committee held on 7 December 2017 and 15 January 2018.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes be approved as correct records.

**P36. MATTERS ARISING** – In relation to Minute P29/Dec/17, the Chair reported that several issues had been forwarded to the Performance Manager for inclusion in the Performance Indicators and that some were to be further broken down including the ratio between pending and implemented planning permissions.

The Chair also reported that in relation to litter enforcement it was proposed that a commercial company operate a six month pilot scheme to address enforcement and this may include fly tipping. It was also stated that resident's feedback would be sought on the pilot scheme. It was noted that no other local authority within a 50 miles radius employed a commercial enforcement company and that Barnsley Council had recently renewed its contract with a commercial enforcement company which had operated since 2014.

Members raised concerns at the intensity of enforcement, especially in relation to accidental dropping of litter, and suggested that the Company be invited to Scrutiny Committee to outline its policy and working practices.

**P37. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18** – 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 2017/18.

The work programme has been reviewed to link it to the outcomes and conditions in the Sustainable Community Strategy and each topic has been linked to performance indicators from the Performance Management Framework to provide accurate data for Members to use when considering topics and the work they wish to undertake.

The Lead Officer provided Members with an updated position in relation to individual items within the schedule.

Discussion ensued on the length of time some of the items, including Economic Strategy, had been on the work programme without being considered by Scrutiny and the Lead Officer advised that she would investigate and report back to Members. It was felt that this could be due to the ongoing work associated with the Local Plan and Members also noted that the Tees Valley Combined Authority could also impact on the Strategy.

**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.

**P38. CREATIVE DARLINGTON BOARD** – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of the Creative Darlington Board held 10 July, 11 September and 18 December 2017 which provided updates on various topics.

The Creative Darlington Manager provided Members with detailed background information on some of the issues and in doing so advised Scrutiny that it was a positive time for Darlington Culture with the realisation of significant projects including the openings of Darlington Hippodrome in November and the Hullabaloo in December 2017 both of which were considered great assets for Darlington. The Hullabaloo gives Darlington a more distinctive offer and is a National Centre for Excellence in terms of providing an inspiring place to learn and play. As well as world-class performances for children, it will also house creative play installations and offer a wide range of creative opportunities and classes for families becoming a focal point for creative education in the region.

The Creative Darlington Manager highlighted the need to promote and build the reputation of the Hippodrome and in doing so provided details of 40 performances over 4 days of Awareness Sessions on the Hippodrome which highlight what goes on behind the red curtain and offers immersive theatre specially created for the newly-restored Darlington Hippodrome.

It was stated that there had been significant movement to clarify objectives of Creative Darlington, especially the need to focus on the Cultural Strategy of the Town, as Darlington was slightly below average for overnight stays and there was a need to encourage the view of Darlington as a great place to be.

The Cultural Strategy has four elements – Theatre Town; Railway Heritage; Darlington's contribution to Tees Valley UK City of Culture bid in 2025; and Darlington offering an accessible, distinctive and excellent cultural offer through public festivals, events and targeted initiatives.

It was also noted that the Culture White Paper published March 2016 made several references to the Tees Valley and its culture offer and that the TVCA had committed resources for culture.

Whilst the TVCA investment was welcomed it was accepted that there was a tourism element. The Maritime Festival at Hartlepool was due to open and lobbying was underway for a Dance Festival which would have no big infrastructure costs for hosting.

The Festival of Thrift and IncludFEST had both been very successful and there was a need to build on those.

Discussion ensued on the success rate of Vue and the surrounding cafes/restaurants and Committee was advised the ownership of the site had changed and there could possibly be more resources available.

Following a question Committee was advised that the Festival of Thrift had relocated from Darlington as the owners of the site had a vision to market the site which the Festival had outgrown.

Particular reference was made to the investment by Darlington Building Society into a play room at the Hippodrome and to women's' representation in Theatre being addressed which had attracted many teenagers and twenty year olds from as far as Newcastle.

Virgin Trains were also funding the Last Train Home Festival initiative and the Visual Arts Offer had challenges which could be worked around.

The majority of business for the Hullabaloo was around Darlington, North Yorkshire, Tees Valley and Durham although this mainly market led and dependant on the location of travelling shows.

Tracks, an unincorporated voluntary organisation are making a significant contribution to Darlington's cultural offer providing live music performances from rock to classical.

In relation to the funding it was stated that Creative Darlington received an Arts Transition Award of £60k when it was established and that would all be spent at the end of this financial year. It was noted that the Tracks Group and IncludFEST have their own proposals and a small injection of money from the local authority could unlock larger support funding.

Members were informed that there was a small Funding Team which provided some support to the voluntary sector and whilst support was also provided to Darlington for Culture who manage grants it was not within their remit to allow.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the Minutes be received.

(b) That the Creative Darlington Manager be invited to the first meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee in the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

**P39. DARLINGTON LOCAL PLAN 2016-2036 HIGHLIGHT REPORTS 17 AND 18 –**  
The Director of Economic Growth submitted Highlight Reports 17 and 18 (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 reports.

Discussion ensued on the difficulties of local authorities to enforce what percentage of development should be affordable housing; the difficulties encountered in implementing a mixed development policy; the projected number of new houses required for Darlington over the life of the Local Plan; projected timetable of transport issues; importance of the retail offer of the Borough and the effect of out of town shopping centres; and staffing and resources.

**RESOLVED** – That the position be noted.