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**OVERVIEW OF PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Place Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**Blackwell Consultation**

2. At a special meeting of Place Scrutiny Committee Members gave consideration to the outcome of public consultation on the Local Plan: Making and Growing Places (MGP) Draft Revised Housing Site Proposals for Blackwell for which 175 written responses were received and approximately 100 comments were made at the drop-in event at Blackwell Grange Hotel on 22 July. Members also attended a site visit on 8 September.
3. The meeting was well attended by members of the public raising concerns on the potential impact on the setting of Blackwell Grange Hotel, increased local traffic, access difficulties, impact on the local amenity of adjoining properties, impact on wildlife levels, concerns regarding flooding and surface water drainage issues, loss of recreational open space and views and impact on property values. The majority of objections were to the proposed luxury apartments along part of Blackwell Lane and use of greenfield sites for housing whilst brownfield sites remained vacant.
4. Concerns were also raised relating to the effect of additional housing on schools, GP Surgeries, local shops and hospitals although there was extensive support for the proposals to restore and enhance the parkland and create new wildlife habitats.
5. Scrutiny Committee was advised that prior to the consultation period, an application was submitted to Historic England to have the land around the Hotel added to the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England; however, Historic England decided not to add the grounds of Blackwell Grange to the Register. Historic England had also been consulted on the revised proposals and responded with a qualified agreement in principle to the allocations, subject to the design, massing, density, and mitigation, which could be determined later, and also subject to the restoration/enhancement of the remaining parkland and sufficient public benefits.
6. Cabinet considered Place Scrutiny Committee recommendations on 3 November 2015.

## **Work Programme 2015/16**

7. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2015/16 and possible review topics, the work programme is a rolling work programme and items can be added as necessary.

## **Director of Public Health Annual Report – A Shared Agenda**

8. We received the Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2014, which was based on the theme 'Public Health: A Shared Agenda', which reflected the partnership working that is necessary to tackle the causes of health inequalities by all sectors not just the Council or the NHS and to help prevent men and women experience disadvantage over the course of their lives.
9. This is the second annual report following the transfer of public health responsibilities from the NHS to the local authority, as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The first report in 2013, described some of the key health issues people face in Darlington and proposed key actions to improve the health of our population and to reduce health inequalities, and the 2014 report, provided us with an update on 2013-14 and outlined work which will be on-going in 2015-16.
10. The presentation focused on areas within the report which related to this Scrutiny Committee and reference was made to the link between health inequalities and social inequalities and how action is needed across all social determinants of health e.g. housing, education, employment, poverty over a person's lifetime.
11. The presentation also focussed on the key challenges faced by the authority in relation to the need to create the environment and opportunities for people to live healthier lives; the need to move from a reactive to a preventative approach to health and well-being; earlier detection of cancer through increased awareness and access and uptake of screening programmes and public sector financial challenges.

## **Car Parking Enforcement Annual Report**

12. We received the Annual Report of Car Parking Enforcement (CPE) which commenced in Darlington on 31 December 2015 in accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004 and covered the whole of the Borough except the A1(M) and A66 which were the responsibility of the Highway Authority.
13. Members were informed that CPE was compatible with the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and aimed to prevent unsafe and dangerous parking. Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's) work to stringent guidelines set by the Traffic Management Act and issued two levels of penalty notices which are reduced by 50 per cent if paid within 14 days.
14. Income from penalty notices finances enforcement and appeals systems, off street parking charges are used to promote LTP objectives and on street charges used for the provision and maintenance of off street parking, highway, environmental and

road improvements.

15. We were advised of the various roles of Officers involved in delivering CPE; various types and locations of parking provision available in the Borough; amount of PCN's issued since its introduction and the number and outcome of appeals lodged within the same period.

## **Performance Management Quarter 2**

16. Members received a further presentation from the Head of Organisational Planning on the Performance Management Framework which included statistical data around the key performance indicators that were relevant to this Scrutiny Committee.
17. Scrutiny noted that in relation to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) Claimants, Darlington was the same as the rest of the North East and mapped the England rate and, whilst there were still gaps between all Wards, the total continued to fall.
18. We were pleased to note the creation of 126 apprenticeships for Darlington residents that had been achieved during 2014/15 and that Darlington Partnership was looking to include other service industries for 2015/16.
19. Members expressed concern on the indicator relating to the 16 per cent decline in Town Centre footfall as the national decline was only 2.9 per cent.

**Councillor Bob Carson**  
**Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee**