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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.

**Work Programme 2016/17**

2. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2016/17 and possible review topics, the work programme is a rolling work programme and items can be added as necessary.

**Darlington Local Plan 2016 – 2036 Consultation Feedback and Preferred Strategic Development Locations**

3. We received a report and PowerPoint Presentation detailing the progress made against the Local Plan process timetable prior to Cabinet's approval to develop Stage 2 of the Plan on 8 November.
4. Members were advised that the three main methods used for consulting businesses, people and interest groups were direct consultation, key stakeholder events and through the use of multimedia.
5. Scrutiny was advised of the policy issues, development and the Visions of the new Local Plan which will provide the framework for the land allocations, policies and proposals.
6. Detailed information was also provided relating to the specific Aims and Objectives including 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.
7. Members challenged various aspects of the Plan including forecasted employment figures and housing needs; the penalties that would be incurred if the Local Plan was not approved within the Government's deadlines; the amount of development in surrounding villages; and the position in relation to individual village Neighbourhood Plans.
8. Scrutiny also raised concerns over a map which depicted 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 agreed to amend the map accordingly.

## **Library Service Review Group**

9. A meeting of the above Review Group was held on 31 October 2016, the focus of which was the design and service standards problems.
10. The Group focussed on the problems and issues of the decision to move and in doing so were reminded that the consultation period would end on 11 November and a report would then be submitted to Cabinet and Council.
11. Members were informed that detailed information on the proposals was on the Council's website and that several Focus Group sessions had been held to gain feedback from parents, local schools, colleges, looked after children and dementia friendly groups.
12. We considered the proposals in depth and sought information on the location of the Art Gallery, staffing implications, number of books available on the floor and the traditional feel that would be provided for the Reference Library.
13. The Group also sought information regarding the current status of the Cockerton Library proposal; whether alternative uses for the Mobile Library Vehicle had been considered; and the home delivery library service which was offered to housebound residents in the Borough.

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