
OVERVIEW OF PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Work Programme 2017/18

2. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2017/18 and possible review topics, the work programme is a rolling work programme and items can be added as necessary.

Monitoring of Outcomes from the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016-20 – Street Cleansing, Environmental Crime and Litter

3. Scrutiny Committee received a PowerPoint Presentation in light of the decision made around the MTFP which included a 40 percent reduction in Street Scene staff and associated vehicles resulting in a saving of £480k.
4. Scrutiny Committee were provided with details of the number of drivers, operatives and vehicles for Street Cleaning Resources before and after October 2016 and were also reminded of the Street Cleaning Standards.
5. Members were informed that the number of Street Cleaning Requests had reduced since the introduction of wheeled bins in 2013/14 and Performance Response Time details were provided in relation to all services relating to street cleaning.
6. Members also noted the results of the Local Environmental Quality Survey which most local authorities undertake.
7. Scrutiny Committee noted the intense projects that had been undertaken with residents in a bid to clean up various back lanes in the Borough. Work included knocking on doors and speaking to residents relating to litter and rubbish in back lanes, encouraging residents not to leave wheeled bins in back lanes and undertaking a thorough cleanse of the area.
8. In relation to fly tipping Scrutiny Committee was informed that the Council reports to Flycapture, a national database to which all local authorities report and Members noted that, apart from 2014/15 when there was an abnormally high number of fly tipping, the numbers remained fairly static. It was also noted that due to a reduction in resources there were less investigations of fly tipping.
9. In relation to Litter Bins Members were advised of the change in frequency of emptying and of work being undertaken to refine the programme as problems area had been identified and there was a need to balance the required number of bins to

problems areas.

10. Scrutiny Committee welcomed the community work of volunteers who undertook litter picks around the Borough and to the launch of a Member-led approach to volunteers which would be rolled out later this year.
11. Scrutiny Committee agreed to investigate further the possibility of employing a private sector company to undertake litter enforcement activities in the town. This will probably take the form of a Task and Finish Review.

Monitoring of Outcomes from the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016-20 – Ground Maintenance

12. Scrutiny Committee received a PowerPoint Presentation in light of decisions made around the MTFP which included a significant reduction in resources resulting in a saving of £380k.
13. Scrutiny Committee were provided with details of the number of employees and grass cutting service standards before and after the budget cuts in October 2016 and in doing so were advised that the standard had dropped resulting in grass growing longer and becoming harder to cut and looking untidy when it is left.
14. We were advised that the grass cutting had commenced in early April and that two full cycles had been completed with the Town Centre and Inner Ring Road being cut more frequently.
15. Members were pleased to note the excellent work of Community Groups which included maintaining open spaces, gathering of leaves for collection by the Council, litter picks and painting of play equipment.
16. Members noted that there were only seven out of 24 Borough Roundabouts sponsored by businesses and that efforts were being made to encourage businesses to maintain planted roundabouts rather than sponsor.
17. Scrutiny Committee noted that the budget for flowers for Roundabouts was now £10k which is substantially less than in previous years.
18. We welcomed Durham Wildlife Trust looking after some of our Open Spaces including The Whinnies, Geneva Wood and Brankin Moor and noted that residents of West Park and Central Park paid a levy to ensure those green spaces were maintained.
19. Members agreed that the reduction in resources dedicated to grass cutting has been severe and will have a very noticeable impact on the local environment in Darlington. There is a strong 'business case' for maintaining a reasonable standard for verges, roundabouts and parks. Members resolved to recommend to cabinet that there be additional support for grounds maintenance and in particular grass cutting activities.

Performance Indicators 2017/18

20. Scrutiny Committee received information on the year-end performance for 2016/17 against the key performance indicators for Place Scrutiny Committee together with a basket of proposed indicators, based on the main corporate priorities of the Council, for our Scrutiny Committee to monitor during 2017/18. We were requested to consider whether we felt those indicators were relevant and were the correct ones for us to be monitoring to give us reassurance.
21. In view of the short timescale provided to look at the proposed indicators, Members were asked to feedback to Officers any additional areas they would like to be included.
22. Members suggested that REG 201 CCTV : time to answer Lifeline Calls was not relevant to this Scrutiny Committee; TCP 200 to TCP 203 was useful data and trends needed to be included within these Indicators; figures and locations would be useful to have included in TCP 600 to TCP 603 and that PI's relating to litter, fly tipping and complaints received relating to Street Scene services be included within the indicators

Councillor Bob Carson
Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee