
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.

Performance Indicators Quarter 1

3. We received an update on performance against key performance indicators for Quarter 1 April to June 2017/18.
4. As Place Scrutiny has a wide remit we heard the performance updates and background information on indicators from the four Assistant Directors covering Community Services, Economic Initiatives, Regulatory Services and Highways Management.
5. Members were advised that the performance indicators were aligned with key priorities and likely to be used to monitor the Corporate Plan which was currently being developed. Many indicators for Place Scrutiny Committee were reported annually and data was not therefore available.
6. Details were provided for indicators which had previous data for comparison and we noted that eleven indicators were better than previously reported, two the same as previously reported and seven not as good as previously reported.

Cycling in the Pedestrian Heart and Road Safety Audit

7. Scrutiny received an update report on matters associated with cycling in the Pedestrian Heart that arose from our recommendations on 5 February 2015, whereby we considered the impact of cycling within the pedestrianised area, due to an incident that had occurred.
8. Members focused on three actions relating to improved signage, commissioning of a Road Safety Audit and investigating the provision of a dedicated cycle route around the Pedestrian Heart.

9. We also considered two options, namely, to prohibit cycling within the Pedestrian Area and redirect cyclists to a safe route to travel through the Town Centre and secondly, to provide additional measures to retain pedal cyclists within the pedestrian area of Darlington Town Centre.
10. Members concluded that signage banning cycling would not necessarily deter cyclists entering the Town Centre and that many areas around the edge of the Town Centre were not conducive to both pedestrians and cyclists due to narrow footways and blind corners.
11. Members supported the following recommendations in the report:
 - (a) To note the updates on the actions agreed by Cabinet.
 - (b) To note the findings of the Road Safety Audit in relation to an alternative cycle route around the Town Centre and agreeing that this is not progressed.
 - (c) To agree to progress the findings of the Road Safety Audit in relation to increased signing to delineate where cyclists can and cannot cycle within the Town Centre.

Creative Darlington Board

12. We received the Minutes of the Creative Darlington Board held 10 July 2017 which provided updates on various topics including Experience Darlington and Culture Strategy; Tees Valley Combined Authority Culture and Tourism; Creative Fuse and Creativity Works; Civic Theatre/Hippodrome's work with children and young people; work and role of the Culture Bridge North East; Opportunities for cultural engagement to make a positive contribution across Every Child Matters; commissioning of services for children and young people; and the Creative Darlington brand.

Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 Highlight Report 10

13. Scrutiny Committee received four brief reports outlining the progress governance, key tasks, milestones and risks in delivery of the Local Plan. As a Member of the Local Plan Members' Reference Group I was able to provide a verbal update to Committee on the reports.
14. I also advised Members that the current Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) methodology would be used with the latest data set to re-assess the Council's OAN which was acceptable if the Local Plan was to be submitted to the Government in March 2018.

Blackwell Grange Planning and Development Brief for Sites He1, He1a, He2 and He3

15. At a special meeting of Scrutiny Committee, Members considered the Planning and Development Brief which had been prepared in the context of existing Planning policies and, following a four week consultation ending on 25 June 2017, on the Council's proposals for the restoration of the Parkland and residential development on the Sites.
16. Members were advised meetings had been held with Historic England to address its concerns and the Brief had been prepared following an evidenced-based approach and thorough analysis of the area and included a topographical survey, drainage philosophy report, tree surveys, environmental searches and highways access points' options. A multi-disciplinary officer team had developed the Brief in consultation with statutory bodies and the Blackwell Residents Forum. Residents were also consulted during May and June.
17. We noted the several implementation options available in respect of the Parkland Landscape and Restoration Plan with estimated costs of £300k to £400k. Upkeep and maintenance of the Parkland would be through an annual residents levy.
18. Scrutiny also noted that a Tree Survey had identified approximately 30 trees that needed to be felled as they were in a dangerous state of repair and that those trees would be replaced.
19. Members listened to the comments and concerns raised by a local resident and the Ward Councillor before supporting submission of the Brief to Cabinet for approval.

Councillor Bob Carson
Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee