

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 15 December 2022

PRESENT – Councillors Tait (Chair), Allen, Cossins, Mrs Culley, Donoghue, Haszeldine, McCollom, Wallis and Willis

APOLOGIES – Councillor Bell

ABSENT – Councillor Mrs D Jones

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Renton and Keir

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Ian Thompson (Assistant Director Community Services), Anthony Hewitt (Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects), Brian Graham (Head of Environmental Services), Suzy Hill (Library Manager) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

CLS25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CLS26 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2022

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 27 October, 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 27 October, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

CLS27 DARLINGTON LIBRARIES

The Library Manager gave a presentation (previously circulated) on Darlington Libraries and in doing so updated Members on the progress of the renovation work.

Members were informed that work commenced on the library in late 2021; details were provided of the work undertaken to the roof, including replacement tiles and guttering; and drone footage and photos of the roof were provided.

Members were informed of the internal work undertaken to date which included the restoration of plasterwork and redecoration, improved connectivity with access to Wi-Fi and improved lighting.

The presentation also provided graphics for the renovated adult lending library, and reference library with reference made to the layout and facilities.

Discussion ensued regarding the energy efficiency measures undertaken in relation to heating as part of the refurbishment; following a question, Members were assured that the engagement led approach along with the new facilities that would be available in the library,

would help to increase library usage; and Members noted that a Library Plan outlining the aims of the library, was in development.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Library Manager for her informative and interesting presentation.

CLS28 CAMERA REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director – Community Services informed Members that the CCTV replacement camera programme was agreed by Cabinet in June 2022, to upgrade the analogue cameras and transmission equipment to improve the quality and efficiency of the system.

Members were informed that the tender process would commence in January 2023 and the duration of the programme would be 3 to 6 months, with work completed by the end of 2023.

Following a question, the Assistant Director – Community Services advised Members that any disruption to the CCTV feed would be minimised to ensure no significant disruption during the replacement programme.

RESOLVED – That a further update be provided to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee, following the completion of the tender process.

CLS29 DARLINGTON RAIL HERITAGE QUARTER UPDATE

The Assistant Director Community Services gave a PowerPoint presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on the Darlington Rail Heritage Quarter (DRHQ).

Members were reminded of the wider work being undertaken in the town and details were provided of the timeline for the works to the DRHQ, with an anticipated completion date of Quarter 2/3 in 2024.

The presentation provided a number of graphics, this included the A1 goods shed, 1861 shed, entrance to the site and goods yard; and details were provided of the planned attractions, including the virtual reality experience and bespoke play area.

Following a question, Members were advised of the cost of the turntable and that a bid had been submitted to the levelling up fund; and discussion ensued regarding possible risks to the delivery of the timetable and revenue costs for the site.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to the Assistant Director Community Services for his informative and interesting presentation.

CLS30 MANAGEMENT OF OPEN SPACES

The Head of Environmental Services gave a presentation (previously circulated) updating Members on the management of open spaces in Darlington.

The presentation outlined the types of open spaces in Darlington and the resources in place

to manage the open spaces; details were provided of the volunteer groups, which included 17 Friends Groups and 470 street champions; and the support provided by the Council to the volunteer groups was outlined.

Details were provided of the range of other agencies involved in managing open spaces in Darlington; the Inspections and Health and Safety regime was outlined and Members noted the other undertakings by the Council including maintaining wildflower sites, maintenance of sports pitches and play areas.

Members queried the sufficiency of signage and lifesaving equipment, particularly in relation to frozen bodies of water. It was reported that an emergency meeting of the water safety group had taken place to identify requirements for additional measures and that increased signage and comms was planned.

Discussion ensued regarding the adequacy of the resources in place to manage open spaces in the borough; the lack of formal strategy to manage open spaces; and following a question, Members were informed that insurance for all volunteers involved in managing open spaces was funded by the Council.

RESOLVED – That the Head of Environmental Services be thanked for his informative and interesting presentation.

CLS31 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - QUARTER 2 2022/2023

The Assistant Director Community Services and Assistant Director Highways and Capital Projects submitted a report (previously circulated) together with detailed performance scorecards (also previously circulated) advising Members of the Quarter 2 performance against those key indicators for 2022/2023 which were within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.

It was reported that of the 25 indicators that were reported six monthly at quarter 2, seventeen were showing performance better than the same period in the previous year; one indicator was showing performance the same; five indicators were showing performance not as good as the same period in the previous year; one indicator did not have comparative information from last year due to Coronavirus restrictions; and one indicator was unavailable.

Of the ten indicators that were collected annually, two had information available and of these, TCP 202 – % of non principal roads where maintenance should be considered (B and C class) was showing performance better than the previous year, whilst TCP 200 – % of principal roads where maintenance should be considered (A class) was showing performance not as good as the previous year.

Following a question Members were advised that data for TCP 101 – Bus Punctuality for 2021/2022 was delayed; and discussion ensued regarding the performance of Head of Steam and anticipated visits, noting that a robust business plan was in place that would ensure the site achieved its expected income.

Members requested performance information in respect of the library digital offer; following

a question, Members were informed of the process for prosecuting fly tips; and Members agreed that the indicator REG – 803 Trading Standards : % of high risk inspections carried out, be reported to this scrutiny committee on an annual basis.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the indicator REG – 803 Trading Standards : % of high risk inspections carried out, be reported to this Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

CLS32 PUBLIC WASTE BINS TASK AND FINISH REVIEW FINAL REPORT

The Chair of the Public Waste Bins Task and Finish Group submitted a report (previously circulated), presenting the outcomes and findings of the group, established to look at the current and future levels of service provided by the Council in relation to public waste bins and any particular issues which may be affecting the service.

It was reported that the Task and Finish Group was established following agreement at a meeting of the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee held on 27 October, 2022; and a meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 11 November 2022, with all Members of the Scrutiny invited to participate.

The submitted report stated that Members of the Task and Finish Group held an in-depth discussion regarding the service provided by the Council in relation to public waste bins, this included the operating model for the service, staffing arrangements, bin sizes and locations and fly tipping; and overall Members had a better understanding of the service provided by the Council in relation to public waste bins. The group acknowledged that resources were limited however were assured that the circumstances which led to bins not being emptied in the summer period, had been addressed.

Discussion ensued regarding the MyDarlington app and the need for clearer wording in relation to reporting full waste bins and following a question the Local Services Portfolio Holder advised Members that an update would be sought from Comms.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Committee approve the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group :-

- (a) That the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee receives an update at a future meeting regarding the digitalisation of the service.
- (b) That bin usage continues to be reviewed to ensure bins are appropriately placed.
- (c) That the MyDarlington app is regularly promoted.

CLS33 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the remainder of the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Members raised a query in relation to funding and exit planning for the Northgate Initiative; the Stronger Communities Portfolio Holder confirmed that a planning meeting of the

Northgate Steering Group was scheduled for January and that an update from this planning meeting could be provided at the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.