

**COUNCIL
24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

Communities and Local Services - Covid-19

2. At a special meeting of Scrutiny, Members received an update on the response of the Council to the COVID-19 pandemic, including decisions taken with regard to the services relevant to this Committee.
3. Details were provided of the services temporarily stood down due to the pandemic and we discussed in particular the decision to not empty street litter and dog bins during the height of the pandemic; noting that that the Council had a duty to protect its staff and as such the service was stood down to enable staff to remain at home.
4. We were pleased to note the work of the Darlington Community Support Hub, which was established to provide support to residents at greatest risk as a result of Covid-19 and that the work of the hub had moved to Adult Social Care following the final weekend of operation on 27 June 2020.

Darlington Markets

5. Scrutiny welcomed a presentation from the Assistant Director Economic Growth and Managing Director, Market Asset Management (MAM), updating Members on the progress made to date on the redevelopment of the Indoor Market.
6. Scrutiny were provided with details of the future development of the indoor market including timescales and noted the phases of development with Phase 1 focussing on the Food Hall and Roofing Works; Phase 2 focussing on improvements to the Retail Market; and the development of the Temperate Gardens and Vaults due to commence following Phase 1 and 2.
7. Concern was raised in respect of the loss of traders from the indoor market. We noted that negotiations are taking place with existing traders and that whilst there may be a loss of some traders, in particular non-food traders, the redevelopment would attract new traders. We were pleased to note that MAM had appointed staff to promote the market via social media.
8. We held an in-depth discussion in relation to the relocation of the Outdoor Market, and requested that, in light of the move to the Market Square, figures for footfall and number of traders be provided to Members. We welcomed the development of an Outdoor Market Strategy by MAM which will be shared with Members.

Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031

9. Scrutiny Committee received a report seeking Members' views on the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031, as part of the consultation process prior to its consideration by Cabinet.
10. We considered the Tree and Woodland Strategy and Members requested that, as part of the consultation process, Cabinet give consideration to the addition of impact on quality of life as a factor when considering tree removal, that clarification is sought in respect of the special circumstances that would prevent the replacement of a tree following removal, that clarification is sought as to whether trees removed are replaced by the same number and that consideration is given to the inclusion of hedgerows, including their replacement when removed, in the Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2031.

Contest and Prevent

11. Scrutiny received a further presentation from the Head of Community Safety, providing an overview of Contest, the UK's strategy for countering terrorism and Prevent, a strategy to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism. Details were also provided of the work being undertaken as part of the Local Delivery Plan.

Performance Indicators – Quarter 4 2019/2020

12. Scrutiny Committee received an update on Quarter 4 performance against key performance indicators for 2019/2020 which are within the remit of our Scrutiny Committee and the Officers present gave an overview of the current position in respect of their individual areas.
13. We scrutinised the 25 indicators reported to this committee, of which 16 were reported on a six-monthly basis and nine annually, with nine indicators showing performance better than at this time last year and two indicators showing performance the same as this time last year. There were nine indicators showing performance not as good than at this time last year and five indicators had no year-end data available.
14. We discussed ENV023 – Number of prosecutions for fly tipping, noting that whilst there were none in 2019/20, there had been an increase in prosecutions since lockdown. We were assured that this was as a result of increased resources, in part due to the new fully manned department now in place and as a result of a reduction in the challenges around competing business demands concerning the town centre, anti-social behaviour, parking enforcement and the control of dogs.
15. Members agreed to give consideration to any additional performance indicators to be reported to this Scrutiny Committee in the future.

Work Programme 2020/21

16. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2020/21 and possible review topics. Members have agreed that additional reports be submitted to future meetings in relation to the Library Services, Northgate Initiative, Back Lanes, Hippodrome, CCTV and Drug and Alcohol Service Contract.

17. We have agreed that the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee will focus on Rail, and I have initiated a Rail 2025 Task and Finish Group to investigate work being undertaken to support the 2025 celebrations. The outcomes of this group will be fed into the next Scrutiny meeting.

Councillor Mike Renton
Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee