

**COUNCIL**  
**23 MARCH 2022**

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**OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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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.

**Northgate Initiative**

2. Scrutiny welcomed an update from the Member with Portfolio for Stronger Communities on the Northgate Initiative.
3. Members were informed that a planning meeting was held to discuss the future of the initiative, the objectives were reviewed and refreshed and a work programme developed. We noted that the issues being addressed were long term and therefore short term timescales could not be assigned. Any exit strategy that the steering group determined would be a long way in the future.
4. We discussed in particular resources for the initiative and Members felt that further updates are required in relation to benchmarking and progress against the objectives.

**Public Sector Executive Group**

5. Scrutiny received an update on the Public Sector Executives Group (PSEG), formed as one of the arrangements to replace the Darlington Partnership.
6. Members were provided with membership details, the key aims of the group and we were informed of the recent activity of the group, including sharing information with agencies in relation to cost of living and supporting the development of the Levelling Up Darlington Plan. Particular reference was made to the role of the PSEG in the Household Support programme.

**Local Transport Plan**

7. Scrutiny received a report providing Members with an annual update on highways and transport from a regional and local perspective, outlining delivery, performance and public satisfaction in 2022/23 and outlining the 2023/24 programme, including the release of funding; and providing an update on the Darlington Transport Plan.
8. Members were advised that there has been good progress on the development and delivery of the transport capital programme; the Tees Valley has secured significant funding from government, including the £310m City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme; and that the Council has adopted a new Transport Strategy for the Borough, Town Centre Transport Plan and Parking Strategy, with work underway on implementing the associated action plan.

9. It was reported that the Department for Transport (DfT) is focussed on progressing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) and Darlington has started the delivery of one of two priority schemes in the LCWIP with the creation of phase one of a cycling route on Woodland Road. We were informed that an Enhanced Bus Partnership has been created to deliver improvements to bus services.
10. Scrutiny were provided with details of the progress on the schemes delivered in 2022/23, the Transport Capital Programme 2023/24 and proposed programme of schemes, and the Performance Indicators.
11. We discussed cycle path usage, maintenance of structures and following ongoing concern regarding bus services, Members were informed of the Enhanced Bus Partnership which has been created to deliver improvements to bus services. Members were also provided with a progress update on the School Streets Initiative.

#### **DBC Mobile App - Update**

12. Scrutiny received an update regarding the development of the DBC mobile app, which was launched in November 2021, noting the reporting features for the two main back office systems, Lagan and Symology.
13. We were informed that an established programme of work is in place to enhance mobile working processes within the street cleansing section of the council and to introduce some new reporting functions, with a focus on the bin/dog bin reporting feature. We acknowledged that prerequisite work is required to determine how people would report the location of the bins.
14. Scrutiny discussed the different mechanisms to enable residents to identify and report full bins via the app and following issues raised in relation to feedback from the app, Members were advised of the long term aim for feedback to be generated for all problems reported.

#### **Work Programme 2022/23**

15. We have given consideration to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the Municipal Year 2022/23 and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

**Councillor Steven Tait**  
**Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee**