

COUNCIL
18 JULY 2024

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.

Darlington Cultural Strategy Action Plan for 2024/2025

2. We received an update of the progress on delivering priorities in the Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 and the 2023/24 Action Plan.
3. Members were informed that the Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 was approved back in 2022/23 and was informed by research, including previous Darlington focused Arts Enquiry Report, development work since that date and discussion with stakeholders including: Arts Council England, Tees Valley Combined Authority, and the Creative Darlington Board.
4. We were advised that the main drivers for the Darlington Cultural Strategy 2022-2026 are to focus on cultural vision and assist advocacy and fundraising towards cultural priorities within the timespan of the document. The strategy used a definition of culture set out by the department of Culture, Media and Sport which covers the following areas: Arts, Architecture, Crafts, Creative Industries, Design, Heritage, Historic Environment, Museums and Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Film, Broadcasting and Media.
5. We were notified of the five priorities which Darlington Cultural Strategy seeks to address between 2022 and 2026 which are; To creatively celebrate Darlington's contribution to the birth of the modern passenger railway, For Darlington to have accessible, diverse and vibrant culture, encouraging economic growth, For Darlington to champion engagement with culture, particularly amongst children and young people, For culture to thrive within Darlington Borough and attract visitors to the Town Centre, For Darlington to have a thriving theatre offer involving people of all ages.
6. We wanted clarification around the usage of the building known as The Bridge – Centre for Visual Arts and whether Darlington Borough Council arts equipment there may be utilised in future.
7. The report stated that Darlington promoted an extensive programme of events throughout 2023/24 which attracted visitors of all ages to Darlington Town Centre, in addition to the Eurovision and Coronation Programme, plus children and young people focused events. We wanted to identify what percentage of children attended these events and how this information can be recorded in future.
8. We entered discussion around the Darlington Borough Council Website and how the Hometown attraction has not been promoted through this. We also discussed how to organise events in smaller villages outside of the Town Centre, officers advised works from

Darlington Borough Art Collection might be exhibited within buildings owned by Darlington Borough Council subject to locations having display space and facilities.

Work Programme 2023/24

9. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2024/25 and possible review topics; the work programme is a rolling work programme and items can be added as necessary.
10. A discussion was held in respect of the current items on the work programme and we proposed a number of items to add the Work Programme 2024/25. Some of the proposed items included the Complaints Logging System which we would utilise in our wards, Parking Review Policy, Allotment Strategy, Policy Review on Rubbish/Fly Tipping, Town Centre Programme and the Parking Review Policy.

Councillor James McGill
Chair of Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee