

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.

Performance Indicators Quarter 2 – 2018/19

2. We have received information on the Quarter 2 performance against those key performance indicators for 2018/19 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.
3. For the 21 indicators which are reported either quarterly or six monthly at quarter 2 for which there was information available, 15 have targets and 13 of these indicators are on target to achieve their year-end target and two are not, six indicators do not have targets however, one is showing performance which is better than the same period last year and five have either no previous data to compare with or no data has been submitted for this quarter.
4. The indicator Town Centre footfall trend (rolling 12 months) has been replaced with Town Centre footfall trend from previous year as it is considered that this will provide more useful data for us in the future and we have also asked Officers to look at including an additional indicator in relation to the Housing Delivery Test which will measure the number of homes delivered on sites allocated within the local plan.
5. We did discuss the indicator in relation to the number of ward Members who were leading or involved in a litter or grounds maintenance based project which was showing low performance and it was highlighted that the figure reported was based on those Members involved in the initial pilot and that improved reporting of activities which were taking place in wards was needed. If Members are involved in any work of this nature, please contact the Officers to make them aware.

Road Safety

6. The Assistant Director, Highways, Design and Projects gave us a presentation on the systems and processes used to measure trends and patterns in relation to road safety accidents within the Borough, through the North East Regional Road Safety Resource
7. The Road Safety Resource, which is based at Gateshead Council and which was set up and funded under the Department for Transport's Road Safety Grant Scheme, provides information and data analysis to support road safety education, training and publicity at a regional level, however, specific local information can be obtained through the interactive map and the dashboard. If Members wish to view any of this information it can be accessed via <http://www2.gateshead.gov.uk/ne->

8. Our Scrutiny Committee has previously been interested to see information in relation to accidents at the Stonebridge Junction since its opening and we were advised that in the four years prior to 2015, there had been 21 accidents and, in the four years since, there had been 11, one fatal, one serious and nine slight.
9. In terms of comparative information, a public satisfaction survey had highlighted that Darlington was performing above the national average in respect of road safety; was ranked number one out of 113 authorities taking part in relation to road safety education, number ten in relation to road safety environment and 28 in relation to road safety locally.

Medium Term Financial Plan

10. As with all Scrutiny Committees we have had the opportunity to respond to Cabinet on its proposals in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2019/20.
11. The delivery of the core offer remains extremely challenging with some significant pressures arising in Children's social care, however, through innovative financial investments and increased income from economic growth, the Council can still deliver the agreed balanced plan, extend the MTFP and a further £0.600 million has been identified which could be used to bolster the Futures Fund themes or be returned to reserves.
12. It is pleasing to note the significant work that has been undertaken to achieve economic growth within the Borough, particularly in relation to Symmetry Park, which has been rewarded with a positive net increase in the projected National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) collected over the coming MTFP. The Council currently retains 49 per cent of the NNDR collected, however, the business tax base is much more volatile than the Council Tax base and requires very close monitoring. In addition, to the potential to lose income due to business closures, the Council also carries the risk of losing appeals by businesses against valuations.
13. Our response as part of the consultation will be to support Cabinet's proposal in relation to the proposed increase in Council tax of 2.99 per cent for 2018/19 and the proposed schedule of fees and charges.

Work Programme

14. We have reviewed our work programme and have requested that, in addition to the scheduled reports, additional reports be submitted to future meetings in relation to the development of a vision/strategy for bus services in the Tees Valley; the Town Centre Retail Offer/Strategy (to include the indoor and outdoor markets) and the car parking strategy.
15. We will also be holding a Task and Finish Review as part of the Local Plan consultation once the timeline for its consideration has been agreed.

Councillor Bob Carson
Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee