

## **OVERVIEW OF PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Place Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

### **Strategic Sites Development Programme Darlington Town Centre**

2. We welcomed Councillor McEwan to the meeting to update us on the Strategic Sites Development Programme Darlington Town Centre, which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 8 January 2019.
3. We also received a PowerPoint presentation detailing the current position and ongoing challenges faced by Darlington town centre retailers. Members were pleased to note that Darlington's economy had grown consistently for three years and that Darlington was rated the third highest retail town in the North East behind Newcastle and the Metro Centre.
4. The objectives to improve the economic wellbeing and vitality of Darlington town centre were outlined and Members welcomed the proposal to invest in our heritage assets, including the Indoor Victorian Market. Refurbishment and redevelopment plans for the Indoor Victorian Market are due to be published for a period of consultation with Members and the public.
5. The Council will be submitting a bid to the Future High Streets Fund to support the objectives to improve Darlington town centre and we have requested an update on the outcome of the bid application.

### **Central Library Proposals**

6. Scrutiny welcomed a presentation from the Assistant Director, Community Services, on the Central Library proposals. Following the decision to keep the main library at Crown Street, and the investment of £2 million in improvements and repairs, a conversation to seek the views of residents has been undertaken and is set to conclude on 15 March 2019.
7. Members were informed of the feedback received to date from both the website and various conversation events, which indicated the need for a refurbishment that is sympathetic to the heritage of the Grade II listed building, identified the need for some level of refreshment and the expansion of the services of the library including greater activities and events. The feedback from the conversation will be collated along with feedback from previous consultations, to inform the future Library Plan.

### **Community Safety**

8. We also received from a presentation from the Assistant Director, Community Services, on Community Safety in Darlington, detailing the concerns and response of the Council to community safety in Darlington and providing us with an overview

of the structure of the Community Services section within the Council and the Community Safety priorities for 2019/20.

9. This Scrutiny Committee agreed to receive an update on the successes of Community Safety at a future meeting.

### **Performance Indicators Quarter 3 – 2018/19**

10. Scrutiny Committee received an update on performance against 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.
11. Members noted that for the 21 indicators which are reported either quarterly or six monthly at Quarter 3 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 four have either no previous data to compare with or no data has been submitted for this quarter, whilst one indicator is showing performance which is worse than the same period last year.
12. We did discuss the indicator in relation to new homes delivered against the five-year supply which was showing an increase from the same period last year. National figures have been published for the Housing Delivery Test, which had been proposed as a possible additional indicator for this Scrutiny Committee, and is a percentage measurement of the number of net homes delivered the number of homes delivered against the number of homes required. For the period of 2015 to 2018 the required number of homes for Darlington was 572 and Members were pleased to note that Darlington had delivered 1043, a delivery test measure of 182 per cent.

### **Work Programme**

13. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Committee for the Municipal Year 2018/19 and possible review topics and have agreed to hold a special meeting to give consideration to the updated Local Plan, and to include the Economic Strategy, Housing Strategy and Car Parking Strategy in the discussions.
14. We received an update in respect of the current position of Broadband Infrastructure delivery in Darlington and Members voiced their concerns in respect of the delay to this work and of the future of the broadband infrastructure in Darlington, including rural areas. Members agreed that as this is a key priority for the town, Broadband Infrastructure delivery in Darlington will remain on the work plan for this Scrutiny Committee.

**Councillor Bob Carson**  
**Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee**