

**Minutes
Environment Scrutiny Panel**

**12 December 2006
5.30 p.m.
Town Hall**

Present: Councillors Wolstenhome (in the Chair), Carr, Colledge, Graham, Kinghorn, Leake, McDonnell, Marsden, Pitts, Simpson and Turnbull.

Also in Attendance: Councillors Cowper, Hepplewhite, Kellett, Robinson and Stoddart.

Street Scene Technical Manager – Peter Lee.

Apologies

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Walton.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November 2006

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record.

Briefing Note from Environment & Leisure Services – Riverbanks

The City of Durham's Street Scene Technical Manager, Peter Lee was in attendance and gave a brief resume of the briefing note as circulated with the papers for the meeting. This briefing note gave details of the City of Durham's activities on and around the Riverbanks, more specifically in the City Centre and Peninsula (Appendix A).

The main points being:-

- The City of Durham actually owns very little land along the Riverbanks within the City Centre.
- The City maintains grass at a few locations out of the City Centre.
- Litter picking takes place three times a week between Framwelgate Bridge and Prebends Bridge; this is done in coordination with the University of Durham and the Dean & Chapter.
- The City inspects and maintains the 7 lifebuoy stations from The Racecourse down to The Sands.
- The river edges had been cleaned approximately 2 years ago with help from the Kayaking Club.
- The Durham Riverbanks Management Group has recently been reformed and has representatives from the various stakeholders e.g. City of Durham, University of Durham, Dean & Chapter, Durham County Council, the various Colleges and various interest groups.

Members noted that the public perception is that the City of Durham, "The Council" has responsibility for all the riverbanks.

The Environment Agency is the body responsible for rivers, and they state that the adjacent landowner is responsible for the maintenance of riverbanks. The Agency now only maintains where there is flooding or the potential for flooding.

Some Members noted that anti-social behaviour along the riverbanks had increased, and wished to know what the City of Durham do or can do as regards this. Also Members wished to know the Police position as regards this issue, and whether Community Support Officers could be utilised in these instances.

The Panel agreed that information as regards the City of Durham's ownership and the work it undertakes along the riverbanks should be made available to the public in some form. It may be useful therefore to feed back the views of the Panel to the Durham Riverbanks Management Group in due course so that a statement from the Group could then be used, if agreed, as an article within Durham City News.

Some Members also wondered whether it would be useful to have a perspective as regards biodiversity and sustainability and if the City of Durham's Sustainable Development Manager, Jonathan Elmer would have useful comments to make as regards the riverbanks.

Also Members wished to know whether the Durham County Council had any plans as regards footpaths and rights of way along the riverbanks, i.e. improvements, maintenance and accessibility.

Scrutiny Planning Sheets – Riverbanks

The Chairman informed the Panel that Claire Lancaster, Manager of the Necklace Park Project, would be in attendance at the January meeting of the Panel and would speak as regards the aims of the project.

Also, the Rights of Way Section of the Durham County Council would be asked whether they would wish to attend the meeting to speak as regards their responsibilities, if any, relating to the footpaths that are adjacent to the river.

At the March meeting of the Panel two guests, one from the University of Durham and one from the Dean & Chapter of Durham Cathedral, should be in attendance to inform Members of their organisations' stance as regards the riverbanks.

Actions for the next meeting:-

- Witness from the Necklace Park Project and Durham County Council Rights of Way Section to speak as regards their work relating to the riverbanks.

The Meeting terminated at 5.55 p.m.