

**Minutes  
Environment Scrutiny Panel**

**20 February 2007  
5.30 p.m.  
GALA Theatre**

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

**Also in Attendance:** Councillors Cowper, Dickie, Hepplewhite, Kellett and Pape

PC Graham Ling – City Centre Beat Officer, Durham Constabulary  
Clare Greenlay – Legal & Democratic Services Manager, City of Durham

**Apologies**

There were apologies for absence received from Councillor McDonnell.

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 January 2007**

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

**Scrutiny Topic – Riverbanks**

- **Witness in attendance, PC Graham Ling, City Centre Beat Officer, Durham Constabulary**

PC Graham Ling from Durham Constabulary was in attendance at the meeting to inform Members as regards the Police presence on the Riverbanks area.

- Officer Provision

Currently within the City Centre area, along with “core” Officers (those Officers who work on the 3 shift system) there are two City Centre Beat Officers and two Community Support Officers who assist. There are plans to increase this provision, but no firm details are available at present. The Community Beat Team, under Inspector Dick Dodds comprises of sixteen Beat Officers split into two areas, Framwellgate & Meadowfield and Sherburn & Bowburn. This includes the two City Centre Officers, though if required, Beat Officers from the surrounding areas can be brought in to assist.

- Riverbank Patrols

Whilst there is not a formalised patrol route along the Riverbanks, Officers often use the Riverbanks as they are an integral part of the footway network of the City Centre. It should be noted that when Durham Constabulary trialled a scheme to provide Officers with mountain bikes, the Riverbank areas were patrolled quite regularly as the Riverbanks proved a particularly efficient means of getting across the City quickly and safely, i.e. no traffic.

- Appropriate Response

Where incidents of drunkenness, anti-social behaviour etc. are reported, a priority rating is given and then Officers on the ground are given this information so they can respond accordingly. Also Officers use all information available to them to try and pre-emptively act, i.e. sources within the University, Dean & Chapter etc. can provide indications of new “hotspots” that may arise along with those that are well known i.e. St. Hild & Bede’s Boathouse, Bandstand and the former Bowling Green.

- Members Questions

Councillors wondered whether the Police considered that additional lighting of the dark areas along the riverbanks was appropriate to help prevent incidents at night. Whilst the Police would encourage any action that would help to prevent potential incidents, PC Ling recalled that an attempt by the University to have additional lighting along Prebends Bridge was met with some resistance from the Durham Cathedral.

Members wondered whether measures such as Dispersal Order etc. were merely moving anti-social behaviour from one area to another. PC Ling agreed that this can be the case and also agreed with Members that especially with youths, there needs to be work done to encourage teenagers to harness their energy in positive ways.

The Chairman and the Panel thanked PC Ling Graham for his attendance at the meeting.

**Note:** *PC Ling left the meeting at 5.45 p.m.*

**Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 – Update relating to previous Scrutiny Topics of Fly-tipping, Recycling and Litter Pickers**

- **Witness in attendance, Legal & Democratic Services Manager, Clare Greenlay, City of Durham**

Members put their questions to the Legal & Democratic Services Manager as regards the new powers available to the City of Durham under the new Act.

Regarding flyer handouts for bar and clubs, this was not thought to be a major problem as the Council has in place a good litter picking service in the City. The Environmental Health Section wish to look at the possibility of recovering costs from the flyer distribution staff. As regards advertising regarding drinks promotions on the side of venues, this is a Planning issue, therefore would be dealt with by Planning Enforcement.

A problem perceived by some Members was that of waste receptacles, namely “wheelie bins”, being left out after collection has taken place causing many narrow street to become impassable for traffic. Members were informed that we do enforce the return of the bins to the property where resources allow, but where we cannot reasonably enforce it may be possible to pursue other avenues via the Environmental Protection Act. However, it was not thought by Officers that it would be appropriate to place a blanket Order across the District directing Residents to retrieve their bins after a fixed time and that dealing with cases on a case by case basis would be more efficient and effective.

The current Fixed Penalty Notice that can be issued regarding this is set at £75 and the fine level if a case were taken to court is Fine Level 1, or equating to a maximum of £1,000.

### **First Draft Report – Review of Previous Scrutiny Topic, Temporary Road Closures**

Members were asked to raise any points they may have had relating to this initial draft report.

It was conceded that in today's litigation culture that it was in the best interests of all parties involved that where events are being held that have activities on the highway that a temporary road closure should be sought (when applicable) from the City of Durham and that the organisers of such events should have the relevant traffic management and liability insurance in place. Whilst it was agreed that the increased costs were perhaps forcing some small scale events to no longer take place, or to reorganise parades on other areas of land, the City Council was unable help further as its fee regarding these types of road closure were nominal (if not nil in the case of charitable events).

It maybe possible to help organisers understand that they should be considering the money required for the insurance and traffic management in any initial fund raising exercise, and that this should be factored in when applying for any grants and awards that may be available. This could be an area where Community Development Officer could advise event organisers.

It was also noted that any disruption to bus routes could also require funds available to compensate bus Operators for their loss of revenue.

The Chairman and the Panel thanked the City of Durham's Legal & Democratic Services Manager, Clare Greenlay, for her attendance at the meeting.

### **Actions for the next meeting:-**

- Witnesses from the University of Durham and Durham Cathedral to speak to Members as regards their organisations' responsibilities along the Riverbanks.

The Meeting terminated at 6.10 p.m.