



FORWARD PLAN

In accordance with Regulations 13 and 14 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2000, As Amended, details of matters likely to be the subject of key decisions to be made by the City Council in the following 4 month period, commencing on Thursday, 1st March, 2007 are set out hereunder. Anyone wishing to make representations to the City Council Cabinet or to the Decision maker about the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made may do so by writing to the Chief Executive, 17 Claypath, Durham City, DH1 1RH by no later than Thursday, 1st March, 2007.

Topic	Decision Maker	Target Date for Decision to be made	Consultees (if any)	Contacts	Background Documents
Review of Debt Management Strategy	*Cabinet	March, 2007	CAB, Welfare Rights	Head of Financial Services Tel: 0191 3018622	Existing Debt Management Strategy, Financial Services Business Plan.
**Local Development Framework (LDF) Local Development Scheme - Revised timetable	*Cabinet	March, 2007	Numerous Consultees	Head of Planning Services Tel: 0191 3018701	To be determined

***Cabinet Members:** Councillors Bell, Dickie, Holland, Jackson, Rae, Reynolds, Southwell, Thomson, van Zwanenberg, and Woods

Publication Date: Thursday, 15th February, 2007

Effective Date: Thursday, 1st March, 2007.

Councillor F. Reynolds
Leader of the Council
Forward Plan No. 58

FORWARD PLAN NO. 58

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Council has been invited by the Government Office (NE) to consider the submission of an amended Scheme. Revisions are warranted by the need to reflect changes to Government Planning Guidance, the requirement for additional supporting justification to accompany the submission of the City's Local Development Documents, the substantive responses to previous consultations and, also, the associated staff resourcing implications of the above.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 March 2007
DECISIONS TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO MEMBERS

No.	Portfolio Member	Nature of Decision	Date
1	Councillor Thomson & Councillor Southwell	Application received in respect of a Home Loss payment as a result of the Council compulsorily displacing the applicant from her home (Ref 310). The applicant currently has outstanding rent arrears of £1,154.60. Recommend approval of grant of £4,000 but deduction should be made in respect of £1,154.60 rent arrears	17.01.07
2	Councillor Holland	Application received from Devin McManus, t/a The Mortgage Company for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £500 Recommend refusal of grant	19.01.07
3	Councillor Holland	Application received from Alan Burbury t/a Origems for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £500 Recommend approval of grant	19.01.07
4	Councillor Rae	Application received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £1,500 as follows:- Paul Wilson t/a Pathfinders - £500 Stuart Rennie t/a Image Joinery - £500 Kevin Milburn t/a Milburn Joinery - £500 Recommend approval of the grant as above	29.01.07
5	Councillor Thomson	Application received in respect of a Disturbance payment as a result of the Council compulsorily displacing the applicant from her home (Ref 307) Recommend payment of £1,000 be made to applicant as a fixed payment for displacing the applicant from a One Bedroom Bungalow	18.10.06
6	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Rook Matthews Sayer – Chartered Surveyors on behalf of their clients, the owners of Lowfield Bungalow, Coxhoe in order to seek a form of access to their Clients' land from the highway, over City of Durham land Recommend that the application be refused	02.02.07
7	Councillor Rae	Application received from Cassop-cum-Quarrington Parish Council for a SRB6 Improving the Heart of the Villages Grant for the provision of a Noticeboard Recommend approval of a grant of £830.00	23.10.07
8	Councillor Rae	Application received for SRB6 Improving the Heart of the Villages grant as follows:- Ushaw Moor Together – Environmental Improvement Scheme - £1,500 Quarrington Hill Village Partnership – Pathway - £750 Sherburn Hill Environmental Action Group – Noticeboard - £800 Coxhoe Parish Council – Village Entrance Stone - £750 Recommend approval of each application	25.01.07
9	Councillor Holland	Application received from Durham County Council enquiring as to whether the Council would consider allowing a scheme of verge hardening at Green Lea, Witton Gilbert.	01.02.07

		Recommend that the application be approved	
10	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Mr Goodall & Miss Robinson of 15 Lime Park, Brandon enquiring if the Council would consider selling to them land adjacent to their property. Mr Goodall & Miss Robinson wish to use one area for garden use only and another area for vehicular hardstanding. Recommend the disposal of a reduced amount of Area A only as per Drawing No. 1750	06.02.07
11	Councillor Thomson	Application received in respect of a Disturbance payment as a result of the Council compulsorily displacing the applicant from her home (Ref 310). Applicant has asked for the fixed payment, which is in the sum of £1,000 as she was displaced from a One Bedroom Bungalow Recommend payment of £1,000 be made to the applicant	16.01.07
12	Councillor Reynolds	Application to purchase land adjoining 4 Finchale View, West Rainton for use as hardstanding for parking motor vehicles. Recommend that application be refused	05.02.07
13	Councillor Holland	Application received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £745 as follows:- Nicola Baker t/a Crafty Creatures - £500 Colin Senior t/a Colin Senior Consulting Services - £245 Recommend approval of Grant to applicants	09.02.07
14	Councillor Reynolds	Application received for a grant of £4,925 from Bearpark Community Association from the Flourishing Communities (Small Grants) Fund to renovate the upstairs kitchen in the Community Centre. Recommend approval of the grant subject to conditions	16.02.07
15	Councillor Reynolds	Application received for a grant of £4,983 from Bearpark Under 18' Social Club from the Flourishing Communities (Small Grants) Fund to provide a youth shelter at Bearpark Recreation Ground Recommend approval of grant subject to certain conditions.	16.02.07
16	Councillor Reynolds	Application received for a grant of £5,000 from the Flourishing Communities (Small Grants) Fund to Sherburn War Memorial Fund Recommend approval of the grant subject to conditions that the work is completed and payment made by 31 October 2007	16.02.07
17	Councillor Holland	Application received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £500 received from George Kinghorn t/a Bayagent Global Ltd Recommend refusal of grant	16.02.07
18	Councillor Holland	Application for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £500 received from Laura Del Denis t/a Conscience Elegance Recommend refusal of grant	19.02.07
19	Councillor Holland	Applications received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £1,000 as follows:- Simon Robinson t/a Simon Robinson Associates - £500	20.02.07

		Richard Gilderoy & Neil Walker t/a AWG Plastering - £500 Recommend approval of grant of £500 to Richard Gilderoy & Neil Walker Recommend refusal of grant to Simon Robinson	
20	Councillor Holland	Application received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £2,000 as follows:- Graham Best t/a Best Entertainment - £500 Kelvin Gilderoy t/a Kel's Property Maintenance - £500 Ed Nugent/Vicky Lawson-Brown t/a Lawson-Brown & Nugent Partners - £500 Philip Bassett & Emma Wooley t/a Durham Dirtbikes - £500 Recommend approval of grant of £500 each to Graham Best, Kelvin Gilderoy and Philip Bassett & Emma Wooley = £1,500 Recommend refusal of grant to Ed Nugent/Vicky Lawson-Brown	20.02.07
21	Councillor Rae	Application received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £1,500 as follows:- Graham Walker - £500 Colin & Ian Stidwell t/a SPE Services - £500 Andrew Hewitson t/a Tiled to Perfection - £500 Recommend approval of grants	15.02.07
22	Councillor Rae	Application received for a Durham City Enterprise Grant of £500 received from Simon Bell t/a Bellcast Recommend approval of grant	19.02.07
23	Councillor Thomson	Application to agree to serving Notices to Quit on the various garage site tenants located on the Durham Villages Regeneration Site at Cassop Recommendation to serve Notices to Quit	22.02.07
24	Councillor Holland	Applications received as follows for Durham City Enterprise Grants amounting to £4,500:- Shaun Emerson t/a SK Emerson - £500 Paul Copeland t/a Up North Home Inspections - £500 Mike Turner t/a thebestof.co.uk/Hartlepool - £500 Ian Philpot t/a Shake-A-Holic - £500 Ian Curry t/a Durham City Apartment - £500 Gilbert Bolton t/a G & M Newlife Properties Ltd - £500 Ian Sellar t/a Laser Technologies - £500 David Poole t/a David Poole Scientific - £500 Zoe Willis/Amanda Brolly t/a Beauty-Licious - £500 Recommend approval of grants amounting to £2,500:- Shaun Emerson, Paul Copeland Mike Turner, Ian Sellar, David Poole Recommend refusal of grants amounting to £2,000:- Ian Philpot, Ian Curry, Gilbert Bolton, Zoe Willis/Amanda Brolly	24.02.07

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22nd MARCH 2007**

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATION SERVICES

Council Procedure Rules – Report from Scrutiny Working Party

Members will recall endorsing for consideration by Council, the report of a working party which had been set up to look at the rules of procedure in Part 4 of the City Council's Constitution.

The final report was submitted to Council at its meeting on the 26 February 2007. With one exception, the report was accepted and endorsed.

It was moved by the Leader that paragraph 9.1 of the Council Procedure Rules should remain unchanged from the version which currently appears in the Constitution.

This paragraph refers to questions relating to reports by Cabinet and Committees. The present rule states that *“ a Member of the Council may ask the Leader of the Council or the Chairman of a Committee any question without notice upon an item of the report of the Cabinet or a Committee when that item is being received or under consideration by the Council”*.

The Scrutiny working group had recommended that this should be changed to allow members to question Portfolio Holders without notice in relation to any decision taken by Cabinet, a committee or the Council or any Member under delegated authority, during the intervening period since the previous Council meeting.

The motion, to leave the current wording unchanged, was, on being put to the Council, carried.

Recommended; that the report be noted.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DRAFT REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

SCRUTINY OF GYPSY/TRAVELLER SITES

1. Background

In September 2005, the Head of Planning Services presented a report to Cabinet on 'Preferred Options Report for Housing', which identified potential options for future planning policy for housing within the District. The preferred options as set out in the report were agreed. One of these options was to 'seek one additional gypsy/traveller site within the Durham City district'.

The topic had been suggested for Scrutiny to allow further assessment of the District and County perspective with regards to Gypsy and Travelling communities.

2. Aims

The aims of the Scrutiny were:

- To build up more accurate knowledge of the local provision for Gypsies and Travellers, additional services that may be required and the effects;
- To consider the effects of either, providing or not providing, one additional site in the Durham City District, as per the Authority's original preferred option;
- To review the current provision across the district and evidence of need;
- To discuss alternative approaches to accommodation provision;
- To make recommendations based on the above factors.

3. Actions

During the planning of this Scrutiny, a number of witnesses were suggested. Accordingly, following a presentation by the County Council's Welfare Rights & Travellers Liaison Team Manager and the City Council's Policy and Regeneration Manager at the commencement of the topic, the following witnesses attended various Panel Meetings and provided information:-

- Neil Laws - Environmental Health Manager (City of Durham)
- Lynne Boyd - Housing Manager (City of Durham)
- Richard O'Neil - Consultant on Gypsy/Traveller Issues
- Sue Green - Co-ordinator – Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (Durham County Council)
- Martin Woods - Consultant on Gypsy & Traveller Needs Assessment (A copy of the consultation document - *Research into the Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in County Durham* is attached at Appendix 1)
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The Panel also felt that it would be beneficial to visit a high quality gypsy/traveller site for comparison. Unfortunately, the lack of such a site locally made this impossible.

4. Outcomes

4.1 Brief Statement of the National Picture

The LGA established a Gypsy and Traveller Task Group in 2004. It was asked to respond to the issues raised by the 2004 circular on Planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites. The initial focus was

on enforcement issues but their more recent research, presented in the 2006 Report (Appendix 1), included valuable information regarding the scale of the challenge, accommodation needs, site provision, unauthorised encampments and delivering the new planning circular on Gypsy and Traveller site provision (ODPM, 10/2006).

The 2006 Task Group Report says:

Currently England needs 16,000 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers but only 12,000 are officially provided. Of the remaining 4,000, around half are currently on unauthorised encampments and half on land bought by Gypsies and Travellers and developed without planning permission. At five per pitch, new accommodation is needed for just 20,000 people. (This may be an underestimate as many Gypsies and Travellers live part of the time in houses.)

The Government has allocated £56 million for refurbishing existing sites and creating some new ones. Local authorities also spend £18 million a year moving people on from unauthorised sites. 'That's a colossal waste of money,' says Cllr Richard Bennett, chairman of the Gypsy and Traveller Task Group. 'It would go a long way to paying for new, legal sites.'

Creating an adequate number of legal and habitable sites would also remove other points of contention between the settled and Gypsy and Traveller Communities. Council Tax would be payable, while the vexed issue of illegally encamped sites on Green Belt and other protected land would wither away because the justification that people have to live there - because of a lack of legal sites - would be seen to be false.

(Comments on Task Group Report in I&DeA 'Councillor' issue 20 Summer 2006)(Appendix 3)

Ann Bagehort MBE, secretary of the Gypsy Council, says: 'Two-thirds of councils do not have the right policies on site development, -----'. Somebody has to say, "We have to do this because it is the law and because it's right." The issue is not going to go away. Gypsies are not going to disappear.'

(I&DeA 'Councillor' issue 20 Summer 2006)

All local authorities must carry out accommodation needs assessments for Gypsies and Travellers within the current round of local development frameworks.

All local planning authorities must prepare local development documentation policies and make appropriate site provision to meet identified needs.

4.2 Current Site Provision

There are 6 gypsy/traveller sites within County Durham, with only Adventure Lane, West Rainton being in City of Durham District. Information on the pitch provision at each site is detailed in Appendix 4. These permanent sites have washing and toilet facilities; some may also have washing machines and microwaves.

Records of occupation of the site at Adventure Lane are maintained by Council Tax/Revenues on a weekly basis. There are rarely any vacancies from the 17 pitches on the site. Government returns also have to be submitted quarterly. The County Council completed these last year, but prior to this, the City Council maintained these records.

The County Council has a budget of £73,000 for the management of the 6 sites in the County. Some sites are being refurbished and the County Council are looking at the possibility of providing solar power on refurbished sites.

4.3 Travellers Liaison Service

The County Council's Travellers Liaison Services has 4 members of staff who are responsible for site management, deal with unauthorised encampments and are responsible for policy

development.

The Service has many challenges. Previously, 'toleration' and not 'acceptance' was the policy, however there is a requirement to balance the needs of travellers alongside those of the settled community. There were also statutory educational requirements to be taken into account, along with the sometimes poor quality of facilities on offer. There had been a lack of confidence in the County Council from the Travelling community but this is improving slowly. There had been cases of travellers contacting the Service to advise of their locations. The County Council can provide portaloos at unauthorised encampments, and arrange for refuse collection as this can often prove to be more cost effective than cleaning up the site once travellers have moved on.

Travellers living in caravans at the roadside are classed as homeless, this being a very complex issue, involving the Homelessness Act, and definitions of Gypsies and Travellers. However, if Gypsies and Travellers have another home that they can reasonably occupy e.g. a house which is not a moveable structure, and they chose to travel and live by the roadside, they would not be considered homeless.

4.4 Local Authority's Legal Requirements

Planning legislation requires the Council to make additional provision if the need is evident, and include this information in planning documents.

Work is currently ongoing on the Local Development Framework, which will replace the Local Plan. There is a need to take into account recommendations from the County Council's Needs Assessment and there could therefore be a need to delay work on this aspect for the time being.

A guide to local authorities' responsibilities and powers can be found in Appendix 5.

4.5 Diversity of the Travelling Communities

The term Traveller is a generic term which covers several minority groups, each with their individual differences e.g. culture, occupations, language etc. Some groups have ethnic minority status.

These communities include Gypsy Travellers (including English and Welsh Gypsies and Irish and Scottish Travellers), Fairground families, Circus families, New Travellers and Bargees. Defining people as Gypsies, Roma or Travellers also includes those who currently live in houses as ethnicity is not lost when a family settles.

4.6 Summary of Needs of the Settled and Travelling Communities and Effects of Unauthorised Encampments

The Travellers Liaison Service tries to obtain information on all unauthorised encampments (Appendix 6). This information is used when making a decision as to whether to ask travellers to move on. Unauthorised encampments can occur where there is a lack of provision, and also where there are inconsistent levels of demand, particularly for transit sites. No matter where encampments are, they can cause problems with local communities. The County Council have been looking at 'zones of acceptance' where encampments would be permitted on a temporary basis – if encampments are set up on unsuitable sites, travellers could be asked to move onto an acceptable site.

One of the most disturbing aspects of unauthorised encampments is any occurrence of litter or fly-tipping. This can have a significant impact upon local areas but such problems are not just restricted to Gypsies and Travellers; a minority in any community will behave in an anti-social way and the travelling community will accept fair legal redress.

In a separate scrutiny study, it may be appropriate to further consider the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller and settled communities in relation to unauthorised encampments.

4.7 Addressing Educational Obligations and Needs of Ethnic Minority and Traveller Children

The Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service promotes inclusion and equality of opportunity for ethnic minority and Traveller children, young people and their families. The service supports people for whom English is a second language, aims to increase the achievement of Traveller children, and promotes race equality and cultural diversity. Resources relating to Gypsies and Travellers, culture and communities were produced to support the work of the service in schools (Appendix 7).

Gypsy and Traveller pupils are the most underachieving group nationally; some settled Gypsies and Travellers still underachieve. One of the key tasks of the service is to close this gap in education. Attendance at school is monitored in the same way as children from the settled community, working with the Education Welfare Service to ensure attendance. Penalties for non attendance are the same as for the settled community, however children from Gypsy and Traveller families are allowed time off to travel for the family business. They will however often attend local schools when travelling, although transport to school can sometimes cause difficulties. Children and young people living on official sites generally attend school on a daily basis.

Some schools stand in the way of admitting children from the Gypsy and Traveller community as, for example, travelling time will impact on the school's attendance figures, underachievement can affect SATs results, or class sizes may be exceeded. There is therefore a conflict between inclusion and attainment.

Gypsy and Traveller culture is taught in all County Durham schools and all are required to have a race equality action plan.

4.8 Part Time Travellers

About 80% of Gypsies and Travellers in the North East are North Easterners themselves. Some are settled and travelled for only parts of the year. This has implications for their accommodation and the education of traveller families.

4.9 Views on the 'One Additional Site' Option & Alternative Forms of Provision

If a transit site was available, it could then make the matter of moving travellers on from illegal encampments easier i.e. there could be provision on a site, rather than forcing them to create another illegal encampment. There would be a need, however, to ensure that any transit site was in an appropriate location or it would be poorly used. There could be cost implications in providing/not providing a transit site. It might be more cost effective to provide an additional site(s), than it is to clean up any illegal encampments. This cleaning usually was carried out by the City Council and recharged to the landowner. The costs could run into £1000s.

The media has a perception of Gypsies and Travellers, and tends to give prominent publicity to applications for new sites. There is a need to talk to communities about siting and design when planning for new sites.

It is possible to obtain 100% grants for the building of new site, and which would also raise income through Council tax and rents.

Smaller sites e.g. 5 pitches, are often preferable to larger ones. They blend into the surroundings better, and are often easier to manage. There is a need for different types of site depending on the area e.g. sites where people could stay for only one night, several weeks, years etc. The Gypsy and Traveller community can run these types of site, given any necessary assistance to apply for planning permission etc, while the Travellers Liaison Service has a good idea of where in the County it would be useful to have additional provision.

4.10 Need to await the Outcomes of Durham County Council (and possibly NE Assembly) Gypsy/ Traveller Needs Assessment

It is a Government requirement to carry out an accommodation needs assessment, and the seven district councils in County Durham, together with the County Council have commissioned this. The objectives include assessing types of accommodation, demand for alternative accommodation, expansion/improvement of existing sites, the need for transit sites and seasonal demand, geographic gaps in current provision, and the affordability of the current and proposed provision. Supporting People and the Health Authority also had an input.

Surveys of the Gypsy and Traveller community, including those living in houses are being carried out, along with secondary data analysis. The project is currently part way through, and is scheduled for completion in March 2007. The assessment is being carried out over a long period of time to take account of varying seasonal demands. Appendix 8 contains further details of the Needs Assessment.

It was acknowledged that due to the complexity of situation there was a need for City of Durham Council to take positive steps to work with Durham County Council in a joint approach to traveller provision.

5. Recommendations

In view of the evidence presented, the Community Services Scrutiny Panel recommend:-

(i) That Option 2 in the 'Preferred Options Report for Housing', as presented to Cabinet on 12 September 2005, should **NOT** be pursued.

(ii) That in preparing the submission version of Planning for Housing, the present preferred option be replaced by a more general approach to Gypsies and Travellers that will take account of the benefits of providing well appointed, smaller, more diverse sites, with a detailed, but not site specific policy drafted to take account of the emerging County and District wide consultation on the Needs Assessment for Gypsies and Travellers.

(iii) That consideration be given to more innovative ways of providing small transit sites, including private sector approaches and possible public/private partnership.

(iv) That with regard to the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller and settled communities this Authority seeks to work positively with the Durham County Council and other District Councils across the County.

(v) That the Scrutiny be reviewed at an appropriate time after the County Council Needs Assessment has been made available and no later than January 2008.

(vi) That a Scrutiny be carried out on the procedures for dealing with unauthorised encampments, taking into account the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller and settled communities.

The Panel wishes to record its thanks to all witnesses who presented information and asks that a letter of thanks be sent.

A Report File, including all appendices, will be forwarded to Cabinet and two complete files will also be available to Members at 4 Saddler Street

Report of Economic Scrutiny Panel Scrutiny of Tourism in the City of Durham

1. Background

- 1.1 Economic Scrutiny Panel was tasked with scrutinising Tourism in the City of Durham (encompassing the City centre and the surrounding areas). The Panel requested information from the Head of Cultural Services and the Tourism & Conference Manager as well as information from the Council's partners – Durham County Council and One North East.
- 1.2 The Castle and Cathedral is a World Heritage site – Durham City has a lot of visitors passing through or day visitors, this type of tourism should be expanded to boost the district economy.
- 1.3 The Panel wished to investigate whether tourism in Durham could be boosted to make the most of the assets available.

2. Aims & Objectives

2.1 It was the objective of the Panel to discover the following:-

- To clarify what strategies are in place and whether improvements can be made
- To establish that current marketing strategies are correct for their purpose.
- The value of tourism in Durham City district
- To identify strengths and weaknesses of tourism in Durham
- To increase opportunities
- To limit and manage threats
- How Business in the district support tourism
- How Durham City Council can support business'

3. Findings

- 3.1 The Head of Cultural Services and the Tourism and Conference Manager attended several of the Panel meetings and advised the Panel on the current situation. They gave background information on tourism and explained how its profile has been raised over the past twenty years. Tourism generates an estimated £92 million to Durham City's economy, however, it should be noted that when compared with similar Cities £92 million is a low figure. It is important to build on this, but competition is extremely challenging therefore Durham City has to give something unique.
- 3.2 Over recent years tourism has come to the fore and with advances in technology it is possible to book a visit and accommodation online via the internet, therefore the boundaries are global. Instant bookings and fast technology makes competition very tough, therefore communication to visitors is very important.
- 3.3 Melanie Sensicle, Chief Executive of Durham Area Tourism Partnership outlined the position and the way forward in tourism for the region. When people buy a holiday whether short or long they are buying into an experience. People will take away with them memories and experiences of their visit therefore it is vital that the experience is a good one.

- 3.4 Members expressed concern about the methods used to market and communicate various places and activities to visitors, also that marketing methods had not been used to their full potential.
- 3.5 Members also were concerned with problems with transport links due to the cancellation of buses and the reduced numbers of trains that stop at Durham.
- 3.6 Mr Tom Keating, an independent Blue Badge Tourist Guide attended a Panel meeting and made observations regarding tourism in Durham City. Mr Keating mentioned poor signage of the Tourist Information Centre and of problems with finding attractions, such as the Botanical Gardens, the Oriental Museum and Crookhall. Mr Keating suggested utilising both the Cathedral bus and the Park and Ride buses to take visitors to these places during the main visitor season.
- 3.7 The Christian Heritage Trail was another issue brought to the attention of the Panel, when visitors are on the Christian Heritage Trail obviously they visit Durham Cathedral and possibly the Church of St Margaret of Antioch but, getting to Churches such as St Lawrence's Church at Pitlington, St. Helen's at Kelloe can prove difficult if no information is available on which bus to get, where to get it, up to date timetables, where to get off the bus and how to get there when you have got off the bus.
- 3.8 Once the development at Walkergate is completed then new signage will be put in place, also visitors who park at Walkergate or the coach park will walk up to Millennium Place and directly pass the Tourist Information Centre. This will give visitors the opportunity to collect information on the attractions in and around the City.
- 3.9 Mr Colin Wilkes, Managing Director of Durham Market Company outlined tourism from a business perspective and advised that the footfall of customers had dropped which could be related to the current out of town shopping outlets at Pity Me and Dragonville and the levels of rents and rates in the City. Specialised shops would be the way to go but levels of rents and rates are very high, thus making the situation circuitous.
- 3.10 The Tourism and Conference Manager brought to Members attention figures recently received from Heritage Cities Group and compiled by STEAM (**S**carborough **T**ourism **E**conomic **A**ctivity **M**odel). These figures can be found at Appendix A.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 That the panel receive updates on tourism strategies on a three month basis
- 4.2 That the panel review the scrutiny of tourism in six months.
- 4.3 That the Tourist section continues to work with partners to enhance the provision of tourism in the City of Durham district.
 - Make better use of the information stands at the Park & Ride
 - To encourage the expansion of the Cathedral bus service route to take in attractions such as Crookhall, Botanic Gardens, Gulbenkian Museum etc.
 - To work with the current rail provider in order to display marketing literature and uniform signage
 - Continue to work with Durham Area Tourism Partnership
 - Continue to work closely with Durham University and Dean and Chapter to encourage people to visit the district.

- To work closely with Durham City Arts, Durham City Forum and Durham Markets Company with the common goal of encouraging visitors to attend festivals in the City.
- To establish links with Tour Operators and develop Christian Heritage Trails visiting local churches of interest as well as Durham Cathedral.

- 4.4 To ensure that the signage in the City is uniform, correct multi lingual and gives an approximate distance.
- 4.5 When the City Centre Co-ordinator has been in post 6 months check to ensure that the City is making the most of what it has to offer visitors.
- 4.6 To market specialist brochures of district attractions and to make this available in hard copy and on the website. To develop the idea of the attractions within the district as a bicycle wheel with the City Centre as the centre and the various district attractions to appear as spokes of the wheel.
- 4.7 To liaise with hotels in the district to ascertain the types of accommodation on offer and other facilities provided by the hotel. It is recommended to ensure that hotels display relevant and update information relating to the district attractions and to pursue the conference circuit marketing.
- 4.8 To liaise with various partners especially Durham City Forum to market festivals and perhaps increase the length of the Christmas and Summer festivals. To encourage the marketing of the Durham Miners' Gala on a larger scale and the possibility of a Mining Heritage Centre. To market the many walks in the district, the Necklace Park, Crowtrees Walk, Ghost Walks in the City Centre. Encourage the development of children's activities such as concerts, plays and festivals.
- 4.9 Members to take part in a stock-take exercise – for each member to identify an attraction or place of interest in their ward.
- 4.10 To fully support the suggestion of a unique shopping experience in Durham City and to undertake a review of the business rate criteria within the district, to entice retailers into the area.

POLICY SCRUTINY PANEL

REPORT

WORKING WITH PARISH COUNCILS

BACKGROUND

1. The Panel was asked to look at how City of Durham currently worked with the Parish Councils within its area and were also asked to consider the possible benefits of a Joint Charter and the issues surrounding Quality Council status.

1.1 Panel Members discussed and agreed the scope of this Scrutiny and a Scrutiny Planning Sheet was produced.

AIMS

2. To establish the extent of current support mechanisms for Parish Councils and consider the role of district Councils as “enablers”.

2.1 To assess the need for the development of a Joint Charter between City of Durham and partner Councils.

ACTIONS

3. The overall topic of Working with Parish Councils lent itself to consideration of three linked but distinct issues; Relationships with and support currently available to Parish Councils, Joint Charters, and Quality Council Status. Witnesses were invited to attend the Panel Meetings and discuss, from their own perspective, the issues involved in the overall Scrutiny.

4. Relationships with Local Councils

4.1 Steven Ragg, Executive Officer of the County Durham Association of Local Councils attended the Panel to discuss the support currently available for Parish Councils, with a particular theme of “What is needed and what is wanted”, from the point of view of the District Council as a potential enabler.

5. Joint Charters

5.1 The Director of Legal and Administration Services attended the initial Panel discussion of this topic and briefed Members on work previously carried out in relation to the preparation of a Model Charter.

5.2 Ann Armstrong, Corporate Policy Officer, Durham County Council, attended a further Panel Meeting, to discuss with Members the County Council’s perspective in relation to Joint Charters. Liz Charles of Durham Rural Community Council, attended

the same meeting, as the role of pursuing and co-ordinating Charter Development between partner Authorities, now falls within the remit of the DRCC.

6. Issues and requirements involved in Quality Council status.

6.1 Lesley Swinbank, Regional Development Officer of the National Association of Local Councils, attended the Panel to discuss with Members the significance and requirements of "Quality Council" status.

6.2 Cllr. Bill Jeffrey, the Leader of Peterlee Town Council and Mr. John Arthur, the Clerk to the Council were also in attendance, as was Mrs. Samantha Shippen, Clerk to Horden Parish Council, to advise Panel Members as to their own experiences of Quality Council Status.

OUTCOMES

7. Relationships with Local Councils

7.1 Prior to 2000, various agreements had existed between some Local Councils and some Principal Authorities in the form of Concordats, Codes of Practice, Partnership Agreements etc. These set out the ways in which these two tiers of Local Government exchanged information, consulted and negotiated with each other.

7.2 The Government's Rural White Paper in 2000, introduced a number of initiatives to enhance the role of Local Councils in relation to assuming local leadership and working in partnership with Principal Authorities to improve the quality and range of services available to local people.

7.3 In December, 2004, the County Durham Association of Local Councils urged a common approach to developing working relationships between Councils and in September, 2005, a new Good Practice Guide was issued.

7.4 There is currently no formal joint consultative body to act as an interface or to facilitate direct liaison between the City of Durham and the Parish Councils within its area. Senior Council Managers however do provide a level of support, particularly in relation to advice to Parish Councils and to the training of Parish Councillors, when requested.

7.5 The Executive Officer of the County Durham Association of Local Councils indicated to Panel Members that Principal Authorities could support Local Councils by taking the lead in any development of Joint Charters and involving them in any discussions or negotiations regarding their formation.

7.6 The County Association would in turn encourage Local Councils to participate fully in the formulation of a Charter and would continue current joint work with the Parish Councils to seek the re-establishment of the Durham City Association of Local Councils Committee.

8. Joint Charters

8.1 In August, 2003, the Director of Legal and Administration Services drafted a Model Charter, which was submitted to Portfolio Holders for consideration. The Model Charter was then circulated to Parish Clerks to assess whether Parish Councils would be interested in pursuing a formal Charter with the District Council. The Model Charter was designed to include other partners as well as the Parish

Councils and was also submitted to the LSP Board for comment. There has since been no further development of a Joint Charter.

8.2 In July, 2006, the District of Easington completed a three way Joint Charter with all its 19 Town and Parish Councils and the County Council. However, any potential service delivery arrangements were excluded from the Charter and would be subject to a separate agreement between individual Councils involved. Policy Scrutiny Panel Members considered that a perspective both on joint working and on the potential benefits of a Charter was needed from the County Council.

8.3 The Department for Communities and Local Government have issued a generic Model Charter which can be modified to reflect the individual relationship between a Principal Authority and the Local Councils within its area. The contents of a Charter would normally include a number of topics relevant to the effective development of the relationship:

Sustainability	Standards Committee
Local Community Life	Delegating Responsibility for Service Provision
Local Governance	Financial Arrangements
Consultation	Planning and Practical Support
Information and Complaints	

The Charter is designed and worded specifically:

- To ensure good consultation and communication arrangements between Partners are embedded
- To identify opportunities for further collaboration
- To identify examples of delegated responsibility for service provision where an interest has been expressed by Local Councils.

8.4 Benefits of Charter Development

Policy Panel Members were advised that Charters would provide:

- Enhanced roles for Parish Councils
- Improved working relationships between Local and Principal Councils
- Better Community Planning
- Written rights and responsibilities for all partners.
- Agreed compacts
- Proper Consultation and Involvement

8.5 Durham County Council had been directly involved in the development of the Joint Charter with the District of Easington, however Panel Members were informed that the County Council has now adopted a more "arms length" position in relation to Charter development, as this was now the function of the Durham Rural Community Council. Nonetheless, the County Council has developed its own internal Steering Group to take forward both Charter development and supporting activities and the Steering Group had developed a two year Action Plan, to underpin and support the County Council's commitment to Charters.

8.6 Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC) covers the whole of County Durham and works in support of Rural areas, particularly in respect of Capacity Building issues, Social Exclusion, Village Halls and Affordable Housing. The Council is currently supporting a Rural Social and Community Programme, funded by DEFRA, which is a two year programme, ending in March, 2008.

8.7 As the DRCC has traditionally offered support for Town and Parish Councils, it is now involved in Charter development, both on a Joint and an Individual basis, over a five year timescale. It is the intention to examine how best to build and incorporate Charters into Local Development Frameworks.

8.8 The incorporation of a Local Council into a Joint Charter need not be dependant upon the Local Council's achievement of Quality Status. So far however, progress on Charter development has been slow, with only the one Joint Charter being agreed and signed, in June, 2006.

9. Issues and requirements involved in Quality Council status.

9.1 The Government's Rural White Paper (Our Countryside, the Future; A Fair Deal for Rural England), was published in 2000. This confirmed Government support for Local Councils and highlighted their role as the tier of Local Government closest to the people. The Quality Status scheme was launched in 2003, with the aim of providing a benchmark for Local Councils across the country, to aspire to and attain. The benchmark placing a requirement on Local Councils to demonstrate that they were effectively managed, with Members and Officers upholding a high standard of conduct and that they were capable of delivering local services which give the best deal for the local community.

9.2 There are seven Quality Criteria necessary for Local Councils to achieve before qualifying as a Quality Council. Some of them are mandatory and some are partly discretionary and they relate to the following areas:

1. An 80% Electoral Mandate (Mandatory)
2. Having a CiLCA Qualified Clerk (Mandatory)
3. Council Meetings: minimum of six per year, detailed organisational procedures in place (Mandatory)
4. Production of Annual Report: detailed requirements to be met (Mandatory)
5. Communications/Consultation: detailed requirements to be met (Part Mandatory, Part Discretionary)
6. Accountability
7. Code of Conduct

9.3 In March, 2003, City Council Members were first appraised of the Quality Parish Council Scheme and in May of that year a letter was written to all 15 Parish Council Clerks within the City of Durham area to assess the level of interest in pursuing Quality Parish Council status. The response was mixed, with 2 Parishes expressing a possible interest, whilst some indicated that they had no interest and a response was not received from all 15 Parishes. In June, 2003, new ODPM Guidance was issued which included Model Guidance for Parish Council Charters and discussion of the possible devolution of certain powers from Districts to Parishes.

9.4 Policy Panel Members were advised that the achievement of Quality Status by a Local Council would:

- Demonstrate that the Local Council meets the minimum organisational standards required by the benchmark
- Indicate that the Local Council would therefore be in a better position to influence the decision making process

- Indicate that Local Council would subsequently be in a better position to demonstrate its ability to take on additional services and areas of responsibility from its Principal Authority

Therefore, the achievement of Quality Status would provide benefits for:

The Local Community - From more responsive services, better communication and discussion about, and access to those services.

The Principal Authority – From evidence for the capacity and ability of the Local Council to deliver services on its behalf or in partnership and from a stronger partnership with a Local Council which is demonstrably representative, competent and well managed.

The Local Council – From greater credibility leading to enhanced representation of the local community. Greater civic pride and the ability to articulate the needs and wishes of that community. Enhanced partnership working by demonstrating the organisation is properly and effectively managed with suitably qualified staff.

9.5 With regard to the take up of Quality Status, nationally, there are almost 400 Quality Councils and 11% of all Local Councils either have Quality Status or are preparing to apply. In County Durham however take up is slow, with those Local Councils so far qualifying, being some of the larger Town and Parish Councils, Peterlee, Sedgefield, Great Aycliffe, Seaham and Murton. Horden Parish Council is also actively seeking Quality Status. However, qualification is open to all, regardless of size (the Northumberland parish of Longhorsely with an electorate of approximately 150, has achieved the status).

9.6 It is also apparent that there are a number of significant potential barriers or disincentives to Local Councils when considering applying for Quality Status:

Electoral Mandate – Some Parish Councils do not have sufficient numbers standing for election and need to co-opt.

Size/Capacity – Smaller Parish Councils may perceive difficulties in providing local devolved services because of limitations on their resources.

Funding – For a Parish Council to effectively deliver devolved services, financial resources must be in place. The Parish Council must be guaranteed and must be confident that “The funding will follow the Service”.

Qualified Clerk – Many Local Councils employ Clerks of long standing, many of whom are either already in possession of high level qualifications or have significant comprehensive experience of Local Council administration. There has therefore been reluctance amongst some existing Clerks to re-train in order to gain the CiLCA qualification, which is a mandatory requirement for the Council to achieve Quality Status.

9.7 Principal Councils are in a position to support and encourage Local Councils to participate in the Quality Status process and perhaps offer practical assistance to Local Councils in relation to facilitating the use of available resources eg Information Technology and Training. Specific assistance is also offered by the County Durham Association of Local Councils in relation to the training of Clerks and further general assistance can be offered in relation to the achievement of the other Quality Criteria.

9.8 Examples of assistance offered by other Authorities include:

- District of Easington, offered to pay the Registration Fees of Clerks beginning training for the CiLCA qualification.
- Bradford Borough Council, paid for a Training Course (£195), for each Town/Parish Clerk in their area.
- Cumbria County Council, established a "Parish Champion", liaison Member.

10 Conclusions

10.1 The Policy Scrutiny Panel considers that the following recommendations enable the initiation of partnership working with the Parish Councils within the City Council's area.

10.2 The Panel also considers that the specific examples of practical assistance set out in 9.8 should be taken into consideration in relation to the Panel's Recommendation No.6.

10.3 The Panel acknowledges that this is a first step and that more work needs to be done in relation to establishing the need for any structured, long term support by the City of Durham for the Parish Councils within its area.

10.4 The Policy Scrutiny Panel will therefore review in six months time the progress of the consultation requested in the Recommendations and explore the outstanding issues noted in 10.3 above.

10.5 The Policy Scrutiny Panel accepts this Report as an interim document in relation to this topic and acknowledges the intention that the Report be recognised as a working document and a basis for the future development of working relationships with Parish Councils.

Recommendations

- 1) That the City of Durham Council support in principle the development of a Joint Charter with the Parish Councils within its area.
- 2) That the Consultations, begun in 2003, be further pursued to establish the current level of support for a Joint Charter from Parish Councils.
- 3) That all Parish Councils who subsequently indicate an interest in entering into a Joint Charter be encouraged to do so.
- 4) That Parish Councils indicating an interest in entering into a Joint Charter also be consulted as to their preference either for a Joint Charter with the City of Durham only, or for a Tripartite Charter with the City of Durham and the County Council.
- 5) That the Policy Scrutiny Panel be actively involved in, advised on and consulted about the drafting of any Joint Charter.
- 6) That the City of Durham encourage and offer practical assistance to any Parish Council within its area wishing to attain Quality Council Status.

POLICY SCRUTINY PANEL

TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM – UPDATE REPORT

BACKGROUND

1. The Policy Scrutiny Panel looked at the Council's Telephone Communication System, in view of comments and complaints from Councillors and members of the public

1.1 The Scrutiny took place between February and October, 2006.

ACTIONS

2. Over the period of the Scrutiny, the Panel received regular information and Progress Reports from the Head of Community Services.

2.1 A Report on the Panel's Scrutiny of this topic was considered by the Scrutiny Committee on 10th July, 2006, and agreed for submission to Cabinet.

OUTCOMES

3. At its meeting on 2nd August, 2006, Cabinet referred the Report back to the Policy Scrutiny Panel for further consideration.

3.1 On 31st October, 2006, the Head of Community Services again attended the Policy Scrutiny Panel meeting to brief Members on progress and further address Members concerns.

3.2 Members noted progress but requested that Performance Indicators be drawn up in relation to response times to calls, to allow for future comparison to actual response times.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Head of Community Services develop Performance Indicators, in the form of target times for responses to calls, to allow comparison to actual response time figures.

2. That the Head of Community Services be requested to attend the Policy Scrutiny Panel Meeting on 3rd April, 2007, to update Members on progress.

POLICY SCRUTINY PANEL

SICKNESS ABSENCE- REPORT OF REVIEW

BACKGROUND

1. The Policy Scrutiny Panel originally looked at this topic in response to the Council's high levels of Sickness Absence.

1.1 The Scrutiny took place between March and September, 2005.

ACTIONS

2. A report on the Panel's Scrutiny of this topic was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee on 4th October, 2005, and submitted to Cabinet on 24th October, 2005.

2.1 The Report included a Recommendation to review the Scrutiny in twelve months time.

2.2 The Head of HR subsequently attended the Policy Scrutiny Panel meeting on 31st. October, 2006, to enable Members to review progress.

OUTCOMES

3. The Report of the Policy Scrutiny Panel had contained eight Recommendations, all of which had been accepted by Cabinet.

3.1 The Head of HR informed Members that progress had been made on the implementation of most of the Recommendations contained in the Report.

3.2 However, the Panel's request for a further Staff Attitude Survey from April, 2006, contained in the Recommendations and accepted by Cabinet had not been progressed, due to the implementation of the new Sickness Absence Procedures with Diagnostic Health Services.

3.3 The Head of HR indicated that it was hoped this would be carried out in the near future.

RECOMMENDED

1. That progress on the implementation of the Panel's Recommendations be noted.

2. That the Head of HR be requested to carry out the Staff Attitude Survey before June, 2007.

3. That the Head of HR be requested to attend the June meeting of the Policy Scrutiny Panel, to report the results of the Survey to Members and to update Members on the Council's level of Sickness Absence.