

**City of Durham**

At a Meeting of **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the Studio, Gala Theatre, on Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2007 at 5.30 p.m.

**Present:** Councillor Hopgood (in the Chair) and Councillors: Colledge, Freeman, Howarth, Mitchell, Moderate, Robinson, Simpson, Wilkes and Wolstenholme

**Also Present:** Councillor Marsden

**58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors McDonnell and Walton,

**59. MINUTES**

Minutes of the Meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2007 were confirmed as a correct record.

**60. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chair welcomed new Members of the Council to the Committee and reminded Members that amendments to the Scrutiny Handbook would be forwarded to them in due course in the Members' Courier.

The Chair advised Members of forthcoming training sessions to be delivered by INLOGOV in partnership with North East Councils at Blackwell Grange, Darlington. The training will consist of half day seminars to be held over three days. Members of the Committee agreed that a copy of the details be sent out to all Members of the Council.

**61. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan, No. 61 which was effective from 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2007. Councillor Wolstenholme (Chair of Environment Scrutiny Panel) put forward the 'Climate Change Report' as a suggestion for a future scrutiny topic from the Forward Plan for the Environment Scrutiny Panel. Members agreed that the 'Climate Change Report' be allocated to the Environment Scrutiny Panel Work Programme.

Councillor Robinson requested an update on the Swimming Pool and Fitness Suite project for the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

**62. DECISIONS TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS SINCE LAST MEETING**

A copy of the schedule indicating the decisions taken by Portfolio Holders since the last Meeting is attached at Appendix A.

**63. CABINET DECISIONS 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2007 and 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2007**

The Cabinet reports had been noted and there were no items on which the Committee wished to comment.

#### **64. REPORTS OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

- Review of Temporary Road Closures Sites --The Committee agreed that the report be submitted to Cabinet.
- Scrutiny of Riverbanks – The Committee requested the following amendments and additions be made to the Recommendations:-

##### Recommendation No.4

- That in order to help facilitate the work ongoing to achieve the Council Corporate Priorities of a “Capital City” (To Protect Heritage, City for Cultural, Recreation & Tourism, and to Enhance Local Economy), the City of Durham identify resources that can be utilised to provide practical measures to aid in the enhancement of the riverbanks.

##### Additional Recommendations

- The Panel suggests it would need a budget of circa £20,000 (as funds or services rendered) to be used in a way to act as a catalyst for other forms of external funding.
- *That the thorough cleaning and removal of waste alongside the river, around the peninsula continues to be undertaken twice yearly.*
- *That the Environment Agency is informed of the importance of some of the larger tree debris on the river to wildlife and that they should ensure non-organic waste and some of the smaller logs are removed periodically as per their normal procedures.*

Members agreed that subject to the inclusion of these amendments and additions the report be submitted to Cabinet.

#### **65. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Councillor Robinson expressed further concern over telephone communications. Members were reminded that this was the subject of an ongoing Scrutiny by the Policy Scrutiny Panel and a further Progress Report from the Head of Community Services would be forthcoming.

Meeting terminated at 6.15 p.m.

# CITY OF DURHAM

## SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

2006 – 2007

# SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2006/2007

## INTRODUCTION



### **Cllr. Roger Pape - Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee - 2006/2007**

The Scrutiny Committee and its Panels have enjoyed a full and constructive programme during the 2006/7 municipal year. Primarily they have been concerned with how the Council has met its commitment to developing Quality Public Services, encouraging Flourishing Communities and ensuring Durham's status as a Capital City. Focus has been maintained on how well the Council has managed value for money services, has met customer needs and made services more accessible. Emphasis has also been placed on environmental concerns and the health and well being of the people of Durham. Finally, cultural development and its relationship to Tourism has been examined and the opportunity to enhance the local economy encouraged.

To promote the above and operate more effectively the Committee has conducted, in conjunction with the Improvement and Development Agency, a number of studies of the working practices of other Authorities. These studies, and a concurrent evaluation of the Council's Procedure Rules, have encouraged greater interaction and accountability between the Committee and the Executive, which in turn has stimulated change and improvement.

Finally, the Committee has worked closely with Scrutiny Members across all Durham Authorities to create the County of Durham Scrutiny Network. As an active member of this body we recognise that it works to encourage the sharing of knowledge and experience and promotes the well being and economic prosperity of the County. The Network also uses this forum to examine its own operation and consider effective measures of its performance.

Set out within this Annual Report are summaries of the work undertaken by each Scrutiny Panel. The information contained in them is meant to give an overview of the individual Scrutiny Studies carried out. The full Reports, Recommendations, Appendices and Minutes of the Scrutiny Panels are available via the City of Durham website, [www.durhamcity.gov.uk](http://www.durhamcity.gov.uk).

## BACKGROUND

Although the structure of the Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Panels has remained unchanged during the municipal year, their individuality, in terms of focus, has been maintained whilst operating procedures have been strengthened.

In terms of individuality, 4 Panels exist:

- **Policy:** Examining how the Council operates and formulates policy.
- **Environment:** Considering wider environmental issues within the District, such as the maintenance of riverbanks and woodlands and Bio-Diversity issues.
- **Community Services:** Evaluating how the Council provides services.
- **Economic:** Looking at regeneration, tourism and enhancement of the local economy.

Panel reports in Section 2 of this report show how progress against these aims has been demonstrated during the year.

## SUPPORT

Over the past year, Scrutiny has again been supported by the Democratic Support Team.

Clearly, as demonstrated in the Members Satisfaction Survey carried out in September, 2006, the support of the Scrutiny Function forms only a part of the overall duties of the Democratic Support Team, and as such the Scrutiny Support we receive is not dedicated as it is at other Authorities looked at over the past year.

Members have previously indicated that this is a situation that they wished to monitor and they will continue to do so, particularly with reference to the possible expansion of Scrutiny responsibilities subsequent to the Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities", and the Police and Justice Act 2006.

There may also be increasing Officer involvement in joint working with the County of Durham Scrutiny Network and again Members will closely monitor this situation.

## TRAINING

Members have continued, over the past year, to take part in different aspects of training and development, including sessions relating specifically to Scrutiny. This training has been held in conjunction with the Council's HR Section and the IDeA. Clearly it is in the interest of all Members to participate towards their own ongoing training and development.

It is also the intention, following the introduction of the new administration following the District Elections in May, to develop, specifically for Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs, a structured training programme for the forthcoming year. The training programme will be developed around some of the current and potential key issues affecting the Scrutiny Function.

The programme will be developed by Chairs and Vice Chairs themselves, in conjunction with the Democratic Support Team. It will be funded from the Scrutiny Improvement Budget, will be introduced into the revised Scrutiny Development Action Plan and will contribute directly towards the Council's Corporate Performance Aim of Quality Public Services.

## **IMPROVEMENTS TO SCRUTINY PROCESS**

Over the past year, in line with the Scrutiny Development Action Plan, a number of improvements have been introduced into the Scrutiny process at the City of Durham, including more structured internal procedures, further Benchmarking against the Scrutiny Functions of other Authorities (Liverpool and South Ribble) and the establishment of our own Scrutiny Chairs and Officers in wider Scrutiny Networks.

The Scrutiny Handbook was produced and circulated to all Members as a courtesy and as a guide to the Scrutiny process at the City of Durham

More structured liaison with Cabinet and a closer alignment with Cabinet procedures has also been put in place.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

### **Revised Scrutiny Development Action Plan**

In 2005, Members were involved in a series of Scrutiny training sessions where a number of perceived weaknesses in the Scrutiny process were identified. Subsequent to this a Scrutiny Development Action Plan was drawn up, identifying a number of improvement projects to be undertaken in order to address these perceived weaknesses.

The Plan covered a two year period, ending in April, 2007. It will now be reviewed, and a further raft of improvements will be identified and incorporated into a revised plan for the next two years.

It is acknowledged that Scrutiny at the City of Durham must now move towards a more robust monitoring of the implementation of Scrutiny Recommendations and it is also recognised that the responsibility and accountability for the implementation of Scrutiny Recommendations needs to be clarified, strengthened and better communicated to the Chairs and Members of the Scrutiny Panels.

Procedures will be further developed to ensure the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Scrutiny process in relation both to the needs of the Community and to the Corporate Aims of the Council.

To assist in this aim, it is the intention during 2007/2008, to modify the standard Scrutiny Topic Suggestion Form, to include a requirement to demonstrate to which of the Corporate Aims: Quality Public Services, Flourishing Communities, Capital City, the suggested topic will relate. When a link has been demonstrated, consideration will then be given to acceptance of the topic.

## **OTHER DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Legislation**

#### **(a) The Local Government White Paper, 2006**

In October, 2006, the Government published the White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities"

The White Paper included provisions to strengthen Overview and Scrutiny Committees within Local Authorities and to enhance their powers in relation to their scrutiny of the delivery and performance of external local public service providers.

## **(b) Police and Justice Act, 2006**

The Police and Justice Act emphasises the Scrutiny by Local Authorities of Crime and Disorder issues.

It includes provisions to ensure that a Local Authority establishes a "Crime and Disorder" Scrutiny Committee and incorporates increased powers and responsibilities for Scrutiny.

Both pieces of legislation contain the requirement for Local Authorities to address "Community Calls for Action", specifically in relation to anti-social behaviour.

Clearly, the progress and development of this legislation will be closely monitored.

## **Scrutiny of Local Strategic Partnerships**

IDeA/Local Government Information Unit, Discussion Document

The IDeA, in conjunction with the Local Government Information Unit have produced a discussion document "A Wider Conversation – Effective Scrutiny of Local Strategic Partnerships".

This Document focuses on how best Overview and Scrutiny can contribute towards the achievement of positive outcomes in relation to the work of Local Strategic Partnerships in strategy development, encouraging Community Participation/Involvement and the reviewing of progress towards the achievement of agreed goals.

Scrutiny at City of Durham will give consideration to this Discussion Document.

## **Partnership arrangements**

County of Durham Joint Scrutiny Network

In November, 2006, a new Countywide Scrutiny Network was established to promote information sharing, and enable, where appropriate, joint Scrutiny working between the Principal Authorities across County Durham.

Invitations were circulated to the Chairman and one other senior Scrutiny Member from each Authority. The invitation for the City of Durham was put to the Scrutiny Committee and it was agreed by Members that Cllr. Pape, as Chairman and Cllr. Howarth would attend the Network on behalf of City of Durham Scrutiny.

The Network subsequently decided to focus on issues that had a common impact across County Durham and identified Public Transport as the first topic for a joint review. The review will be commenced in the Spring/Summer of 2007.

It is anticipated that the Chair of City of Durham Scrutiny and one other Senior Scrutiny Member will continue to participate in the development and the work of the County of Durham Joint Scrutiny Network.

**CITY OF DURHAM SCRUTINY**



*City of*

**REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY PANELS**

Durham

**2006/2007**



# REPORT OF ECONOMIC SCRUTINY PANEL



**Chair – Councillor Amanda Hopgood**

**Vice Chair – Councillor Roger Pape**

## **Members of the Panel 2006/2007**

**Councillors Colledge, Cowper, \*Cummings, Gill Graham, \*McDonnell, Rochford, Shaw, Simmons, Simpson, and Stoddart.**

\* Please note that in accordance with Min 347, 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2007, Councillor Cummings replaced Councillor McDonnell as a member of Economic Scrutiny Panel.

## **Background**

The Economic Scrutiny Panel scrutinised the following topics over the reporting period April 2006 – April 2007.

SRB 6 (Single Regeneration Budget) – April – July 2006  
Tourism – September 2006 – January 2007

The panel also carried out reviews of previous scrutiny topics including GP Provision, Incentives to small Business' and Leisure Services 5 Year Plan.

## **Scrutiny of SRB 6**

**Relating to Corporate Aim –**

- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Active, Inclusive & Safe
  - Learning Opportunities for all
  - Health & Well Being

## **FINDINGS**

The Panel discovered that not all Members of the Panel were familiar with the activities carried out under the umbrella of SRB 6. Information was provided on previous achievements of SRB and the structures of the programmes.

The County Council's SRB Programme Manager gave Members an insight into monitoring techniques and evaluation processes involved in gaining funding and explained the cascade of funding from Government down to project level.

Professor Robinson of Durham University who was working on an evaluation of SRB attended a meeting and informed Members 40 Programmes had been evaluated. Some of the programmes were complicated and diverse, very often programmes were good on the ground.

Programme targets had been met and exceeded in most cases; however programmes should evolve as they develop therefore requiring changes in procedures.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- That the success of SRB be publicised both internally and externally throughout the organisation
- That future application procedure are clearly monitored and guidance is issued to applicants.
- That there is uniform approval across the district.
- That Members are content with the governance arrangements between Central Government, One North East, Durham County Council and City of Durham Council.
- That awareness is raised about the subjective nature of projects and the difficulty in quantifying success
- That future funding is publicised at an early stage.
- That a review date of the topic be given once a date has been set for the evaluation of the outcomes, which is being carried out by Durham University.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ John Tindale – Community & Economic Development Manager

## **EXTERNAL WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Mr Bowyer - Durham County Council
- ❖ Professor Robinson - St. Chad's College, University of Durham

## **Scrutiny of Tourism**

### **Relating to Corporate Aim –**

- **Capital City**
  - Protect Heritage; City for Culture
  - Recreation & Tourism
  - Enhance Local Economy

## **FINDINGS**

The Head of Cultural Services and Tourism and Conference Manager advised the Panel on the current situation in relation to tourism in the City. Tourism generates an estimated £92 million to Durham City's economy, but when compared to similar Cities this is a low figure.

Advances in technology have moved tourism to the fore; it is very easy for visitors to make arrangements to make a visit via the internet. Instant bookings and fast technology have created a very competitive environment.

The Chief Executive of Durham Area Tourism Partnership outlined the position and the way forward for the region. When people visit the city, whether on a short or long stay, they are buying an experience. Therefore it is vital that people take away with them positive memories of that experience.

Members expressed concern over the marketing of places of interest and events and problems with transport links to the out lying villages. A Blue Badge Holder attended a meeting of the Panel and commented on the poor signage within the City and the added problem of finding attractions.

The Managing Director of Durham Markets Company gave a perspective of the retailers and advised that the footfall of customers had dropped in the City centre which could be related to the opening of the out of town shopping outlets at Dragonville and Pity Me.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- That the Panel receive updates on the Tourism strategy on a three month basis
- That the Panel review the Scrutiny of Tourism in six months
- 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 and 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.
- To ensure that the signage in the City is uniform, correct, multi lingual and gives an approximate distance
- When the City's Events 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
- To market specialised brochures of district to attractions and to make this available in hard copy and on the Council's 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 attractions within the district as the spokes of the wheel.
- 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.
- To liaise with various partners especially Durham City Forum to market festivals and perhaps increase the length of the Summer and Christmas festivals. To encourage the marketing of 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.
- Members to take part in a stock-take exercise – for each member to identify an attraction or place of interest in their ward.
- To fully support the suggestion of the 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.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Tracey Ingle – Head of Cultural Services
- ❖ Martin Boulton – Tourism & Conference Manager

## **EXTERNAL WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Chief Executive of Durham Area Tourism Partnership
- ❖ Mr Keating – Blue Badge Tour Guide for City of Newcastle
- ❖ Colin Wilkes - Managing Director of Durham Markets Company

## **Scrutiny of GP Provision – Review**

### **Relating to Corporate Aim –**

- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Health & Well being

### **FINDINGS**

A review of the Scrutiny of GP Provision in the district was undertaken with the Policy and Regeneration Manager in attendance. The panel were advised that the recommended forum/focus group had been replaced within the Local Development Framework.

The panel were informed that meetings with the PCT would take place on an annual basis and that a forth coming report would detail the consultation process.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- That the review be deferred until the report to Cabinet has been approved.
- That the Panel be presented with the Local Development Framework report at a later date after the report has been approved by Cabinet.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Gavin Scott – Policy & Regeneration Manager

## **Scrutiny of Incentives to Small Business – Review**

### **Relating to Corporate Aim –**

- **Capital City**
  - Enhance Local Economy

### **FINDINGS**

A review of the Scrutiny of Incentives to Small Business was undertaken with the Economic and Community Development Manager in attendance. The Panel were advised of the assistance given to applicants and the success rates and of the work carried out with schools.

The Panel were informed that 90% of applications are approved and that 90% of those businesses are surviving 18 months or more.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- That a further review be carried out in 12 months
- The Panel agreed that they were content with the progress that had been made.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ John Tindale – Community & Economic Development Manager

## **Scrutiny of Leisure Services 5 Year Plan – Review**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims –**

- **Quality Public Services**
- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Well managed value for money services
  - Meeting customer needs
  - Accessible services for all
  - Active inclusive & safe
  - Health & well being

## **FINDINGS**

A review of the Scrutiny of Leisure Services 5 Year Plan was undertaken with the Senior Leisure Development Officer in attendance. The Panel were advised of increased investment in the service providing equipment and increasing staff numbers.

The Panel were informed that the Service continues to offer a wide range of activities to the public and emphasises strong links with Partners.

Details were given of funding for a partnership between City of Durham, Chester-le-Street District Council and County Durham Primary Health Care Trust has been agreed and will be reviewed year on year. Also, a new post has been created dedicated to exercise referrals.

Leisure Services had reported increased take-up in exercise programmes in people over 60 and of those claiming benefits. Deerness leisure centre is now an Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) registered site and we have employed an activity coordinator to encourage participation from disabled groups.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- That a further review of Leisure Services takes place in 12 months time.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Deborah Holmes – Senior Leisure Development Officer

# REPORT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL



**Chair – Councillor Barbara Howarth**

**Vice Chair – Councillor Stuart Walton**

## **Panel Membership for 2006/2007**

**Councillors Griffin, Hepplewhite, Hopgood, Kinghorn, Moderate, Norman, Robinson, Taylor, Wolstenholme and Young**

## **Background**

Between 1 April 2006 and 30 April 2007, the Community Services Scrutiny Panel fulfilled the following programme of scrutiny:-

- Provision of Gypsy/Traveller Sites (commenced May 2006 and approved by Panel February 2007)
- Graveyards (commenced February 2007 and ongoing)

The Panel also reviewed:-

- Council House Repairs (October 2006)
- Council Garages (November 2006)
- Homelessness (December 2006)

A presentation is due to be given to all Members on the Choice Based Lettings Policy, and the Allocations Policy will be reviewed following this. Review of the Playing Pitch Strategy has been deferred until the summer season, and progress on the Decent Homes Standard is monitored via the performance figures.

## **Scrutiny of Gypsy/Traveller Sites**

**Relating to Corporate Aims –**

- **Quality Public Services**
  - Meeting customer needs
  - Accessible services for all
- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Environmentally sensitive

In September 2005, the Head of Planning Services presented a report to Cabinet on 'Preferred Options Report for Housing', which identified potential options within the District. The preferred options as detailed in the report were agreed by Cabinet, one of these being 'to seek one additional gypsy/traveller site within the Durham City District'.

This topic was suggested for Scrutiny to allow further assessment of the District and County perspectives with regard to Gypsy and Travelling communities.

## **FINDINGS**

In carrying out this scrutiny, the Panel wished to build up a more accurate knowledge of the local provision for Gypsies and Travellers; consider the effects of providing, or not providing, an additional site within the district; review the current provision across the District and evidence of need, and to consider alternative approaches to accommodation provision.

A presentation was given to the Panel by the County Council's Welfare Rights and Travellers Liaison Team Manager and the City Council's Policy and Regeneration Manager at the commencement of the topic and subsequently a number of witnesses attended the Panel's meetings and provided information.

From this, the following was established:-

- 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 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.
- 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.
- There are 6 gypsy/traveller sites within County Durham, with only Adventure Lane, West Rainton being in City of Durham District. 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 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.
- 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. 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- The Travellers Liaison Service tries to obtain information on all unauthorised encampments. 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.
- 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.
- 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.



- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the evidence presented to the Panel, the following recommendations were made:-

- (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 felt that it was particularly important to highlight their feeling that this topic required further consideration when the results of the Needs Assessment Study were available, and also their suggestion that a scrutiny be carried out into the effects of unauthorised encampments.

This report and recommendations is to be considered by Cabinet in April 2007.

### **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Gavin Scott - Policy & Regeneration Manager
- ❖ Neil Laws - Environmental Health Manager
- ❖ Lynne Boyd - Housing Manager

### **EXTERNAL WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Scott McNally - Welfare Rights & Travellers Liaison Team Manager – Durham County Council
- ❖ Sue Green - Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service – Durham County Council
- ❖ Martin Woods - Consultant on Gypsy/Traveller Needs Assessment – Durham County Council
- ❖ Richard O'Neil – Consultant – Gypsy/Traveller Issues

## **Scrutiny of Graveyards**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims –**

- **Quality Public Services**
  - Well managed value for money services
  - Meeting customer needs
- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Environmentally sensitive

The topic of Graveyards was commenced in February 2007.

The Panel set the terms of reference for this Scrutiny at its meeting in March 2007, and it was agreed that the topic would then be put on hold until May 2007.

During this Scrutiny, Members wish to consider issues surrounding how the Council became responsible for closed graveyards/cemeteries historically; whether adequate attention is given to maintenance and to what standards memorial repairs are carried out; the closed cemeteries/graveyards for which the City Council is responsible; how a churchyard becomes 'closed'; who owns the closed churchyards within the District; whether the City Council has an obligation to take on maintenance of closed churchyards/graveyards and how the Council's costs for maintenance are met.

Other issues to be investigated include whether any other organisations/individuals have an input or responsibility for maintenance e.g. Church, families etc and what their roles are; the maintenance

and management responsibilities for War Graves, and how the monies provided by the War Graves Commission for their upkeep is used; how much money the City Council allocates for the management, maintenance and upkeep of closed churchyards and how this compared to the amount of works needed and which aspects of maintenance are the Council's responsibilities e.g. walls, fences, paths, trees, grass cutting etc;

The Scrutiny will recommence in May 2007, and a report will be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

## **REVIEW OF COUNCIL HOUSE REPAIRS**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims –**

- **Quality Public Services**
  - Well managed value for money services
  - Meeting customer needs
  
- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Health & wellbeing

Following the original Scrutiny as part of the Building Services Best Value Improvement Plan in July 2003, this topic had been reviewed by the Panel on a number of occasions. A review had been carried out in March 2006, and at that time, a number of further recommendations had been made. It was agreed that progress on these recommendations be reviewed in October/November 2006, and accordingly, the Head of Community Services, Head of Property Services and Operations Manager attended the Panel's meeting in October 2006 to update Members.

### **FINDINGS**

- Ongoing staff training was being given to CityInfo staff, and 21 staff were trained in repairs.
- A new booklet giving tenants property details to assist them in reporting repairs is currently being prepared
- Three vacancies had now been filled, and a further 2 were being recruited. The Head of Community Services was confident that peak period demand could now be met.
- There had been a 56% decrease in the repairs backlog.
- The voids tracking system was working well, with Property Services having now taken responsibility for what were previously 'grey' areas. The process was becoming much more efficient, with properties being returned to Housing more rapidly.
- A report had been submitted to Council in August 2006 regarding the procurement of new computer system.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel made the following recommendations:-

- (i) That the Head of Property Services, Head of Community Services and their staff be formally thanked for their efforts in bringing about the improvements noted.

- (ii) That the topic of Council House Repairs be reviewed in early 2008, following the introduction of the new computer system, and the opportunity for staff to become accustomed to its use.

## **Review of Council Garages**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims –**

#### **➤ Quality Public Services**

- Well managed value for money services
- Meeting customer needs

The topic of Council Garages was considered by the Community Services Scrutiny Panel in 2005, following concerns that some garages were being used inappropriately.

One of the Panel's recommendations was that a Policy be written regarding the letting, use and management of Council Garages. This had been done, and the Housing Manager attended the Panel's meeting in July to discuss this. The Policy and amended Tenancy Agreement was approved by Cabinet in September 2006.

The topic as a whole was reviewed in November 2006.

### **FINDINGS**

- Following the approval of the new Policy and Tenancy Agreement by Cabinet in September 2006, all new tenants since 1 October 2006 had signed this Agreement.
- One of the recommendations in the report of October 2005 was that all existing tenants sign the new Agreement. The Rents Section was currently reviewing garage tenants' rent accounts so that any action which could lead to termination of the tenancy can be taken before the new Agreements are issued by Housing to tenants for signature.
- The new Agreement would be sent to existing tenants during December 2006, and it was anticipated the process of having them all signed will be a fairly long one. It was hoped all garage tenants will have signed the new Tenancy Agreement by the beginning of the next financial year.
- Tenants are being asked to report any inappropriate used of garages of which they are aware.
- Housing Officers were continuing to try to let empty garages, and the future of those garages where there is no demand was being considered.
- A programme of regular inspections had been recommended by the Panel. Unfortunately, this had not been possible to implement due to limitation of resources. Although understanding the nature of this problem, Members continue to express concern about this.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of issues noted in the report, and progress made so far, the Community Services Scrutiny Panel recommend the following:-

- (i) That the Review Report be accepted.
- (ii) That thanks be expressed to staff who have worked towards achieving the Recommendations contained in the Scrutiny of Council Garages Report, as approved and adopted by Cabinet in October 2005. The writing of a Policy and administration of the New Tenants' Agreement were particularly commendable.

- (iii) The need for resources to be made available for the development of inspection routines was re-emphasised, and twice yearly inspection was recommended, Members having expressed concern that due to resource implications it had not been possible for a system of regular garage inspection to be established.
- (iv) That the topic of Council Garages be reviewed again in January 2008.

This report and recommendations were considered by Cabinet in January 2007, and the report was agreed. Recommendation (iii) was, however, referred back to the Panel for further consideration, due to concerns about the cost implications. The Panel would be reconsidering this recommendation after May 2007, and discussing alternative options.

## **Review of Homelessness**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims –**

- **Quality Public Services**
  - Well managed value for money services
  - Meeting customer needs, accessible services for all
- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Health & Well-being

The Homelessness Strategy was prepared in 2003, and was one of the areas looked at when the Panel considered Homelessness in 2004. The Panel's report was approved and adopted by Cabinet, with a recommendation that it be reviewed within two years.

### **FINDINGS**

In respect of the recommendations made in the previous report, the Homelessness Strategy was being monitored, reviewed and revised, measures to prevent repeat homelessness were being developed, particularly by the new Homelessness Prevention Officer, partnership working with DASH, DISC etc continued to be developed, an additional member of staff had been appointed at Housing specifically to deal with homelessness prevention, and additional emergency accommodation was provided via DASH.

The Panel required additional information on mental health issues and homelessness, and it was suggested the Durham County Council and the PCT be invited to a future meeting to consider this area.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (i) That the Council continues to progress and monitor the Homelessness Strategy an Action Plan and works with Partners to provide support and prevent repeat homelessness.
- (ii) That the information leaflet on domestic violence be circulated to all Members for information.
- (iii) That the Council aims to retain the position of Homelessness Prevention Officer beyond the expiry of the fixed term contract in 2008.
- (iv) That the Review of Rough Sleeping be updated, possibly by the subject being brought to the attention of the county-wide Housing Action Partnership.
- (v) That representatives of Durham County Council and County Durham PCT be invited to attend a Panel meeting to discuss homelessness in relation to mental health issues and support provision, and that this be arranged for six months' time.
- (vi) That the Panel receives and update on the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan after they have been reviewed by the Authority in 2008, the Panel's recommended review date being July 2008.

The Panel's report and recommendations were approved by Cabinet in February 2007.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman wish to thank all Council Officers, Portfolio Holders and External Witnesses who have contributed to Community Services Scrutiny over the past year.

We are very grateful to the Democratic Support Team for their assistance, with particular thanks to the Panel's Support Officer.

# REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL



**Chair – Councillor Philip Wolstenholme**

**Vice Chair – Councillor Arnie Simpson**

## **Panel Membership for 2006/2007**

**Councillors Carr, Colledge, Graham, Kinghorn, Leake, McDonnell, Marsden, Pitts, Turnbull and Walton**

## **Background**

The Environment is a topic which affects everyone and is top of the agenda nationwide. The Environment Scrutiny Panel hopes that they have played their small part in looking at issues that relate to the District.

The Environmental Scrutiny Panel has had a very full year of activity. The topics investigated have been very interesting, they being:

- Fly-tipping (*commenced January 2006, sent to Cabinet June 2006*)
- Recycling (*commenced January 2006, sent to Cabinet August 2006*)
- Litter Pickers (*commenced February 2006, sent to Cabinet September 2006*)
- Riverbanks (*commenced November 2006, to go to Scrutiny Committee June 2007*)

Also the following Reviews have taken place.

- Review of Temporary Road Closures (*July 2006, February 2007*)
- Review of Biodiversity (*October 2006, January 2007*)
- Review of Unauthorised Parking on Council Owned Land (*October 2006, November 2006*)

The Chairman and Vice Chairman wish to thank all Council Members, and both Council Officers and External Witnesses who attended the panel meetings. Also a special thanks to the Democratic Support Officers.

## **Scrutiny of Fly-Tipping**

**Relating to Corporate Aim –**

- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Environmentally sensitive

The subject was allocated from the Scrutiny Committee to the Environment Panel, the initial proposal for the topic coming from the Chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Panel. As the Durham County Council have instigated a permit system for use of their Household Waste and Recycling Centres, Members felt this may have had a negative effect, causing the number of fly-tipping incidents to increase.

## **FINDINGS**

- Members of the public have a “duty of care” when using contractor and therefore individuals must ensure that before waste is taken off-site to check that the Contractor / Skip Hire Company holds a valid Waste Carriers’ Licence from the Environment Agency for the disposal of the relevant materials.
- There is a lack of sufficient education regarding the subject of fly-tipping and the associated procedures for disposal of waste, via waste bins, green waste bins, “Kerb-It” recycling, Household Waste and Recycling Centres and recycling points etc.
- The Fly-Tipping Enforcement Officer based at the County Hall (working for the Environment Agency) is funded from various sources, but it was noted that whilst Easington District Council were due to “come onboard” from April 2006, Sedgefield Borough Council have now pulled out from the joint funding.
- The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 is a piece of legislation which covers a wide range of issues which the Environmental Services Department deal with. There are many opportunities to use new or extended powers set out within this Act to help tackle the issue of fly-tipping. However, it must be ascertained which approach is most suitable for the City of Durham in each case.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the City of Durham act such that:
  - (a) The City of Durham urge that the Environment Agency to continue the post of Joint Fly-Tipping Enforcement Officer when the current phase of funding reaches completion.
  - (b) The City of Durham also continues its support for this post.
  - (c) Local Members are informed as regards any enforcement that is envisaged, that which is being considered and that which is to be implemented.
2. That the City of Durham continues to utilise the various means at its disposal to combat Fly-tipping:
  - (a) By education of the Public by press releases, articles in Durham City News, notices within Council buildings, public libraries etc. with particular emphasise on individuals’ and Contractors’ “duty of care” when disposing of waste especially as regards the removal of waste via skip hire companies.
  - (b) In addition, Neighbourhood Wardens could help to inform residents of the various options available as regards waste disposal, with a mind to reduce the number of incidents of fly-tipping from individual households.
3. That the City of Durham’s Environmental Services Department research how best to use the powers set out within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and that the Panel report back to Cabinet as soon as possible.



## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Jeff Riddell - Head of Environment & Leisure Services
- ❖ Tom Punton - Environmental Services Manager

## **EXTERNAL WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Jim Crammon - Fly-tipping Enforcement Officer – Environment Agency

## **Scrutiny of Recycling**

### **Relating to Corporate Aim –**

- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Environmentally sensitive
- **Quality Public Services**
  - Well managed value for money services
  - Meeting customer needs

The City of Durham was the pilot Authority for the “Kerb-It” Recycling Scheme in the County and the Panel wished to see how the scheme was progressing and whether there was anything the Authority could do to increase its already high recycling rate.

## **FINDINGS**

- The cost for stickers placed on wheelie bins to promote recycling was £3,000 which represents extremely good value for money. It is thought that an annual sticker campaign would be an excellent method of proven promotion for the “Kerb-It” scheme.
- An alternative to including cardboard and plastics within the “Kerb-It” scheme (costly) would be to provide suitable recycle “bins” at prominent sites (such a supermarket car parks) to allow for member of the public to recycle these materials in addition. Such large recycling bins are currently being sourced for this purpose.
- If the City of Durham was to provide an additional vehicle for the purpose of collecting the reusable furniture there would be an associated cost of the purchase of the vehicle and the associated running costs. These costs could not be recouped by the resale of the collected goods (at this time) and therefore the existing procedure should be adhered to. Also as the refuse vehicles are used for household wheelie bin collections only 4 days out of 5, the use of the vehicles on the “spare” day is cost effective as the vehicles are already in place, with only the cost of fuel being required. The Environmental Services Manager is scheduled to attend Liverpool City Council to look into the possibility of implementing similar schemes within the City of Durham area, albeit on a smaller scale.
- The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 is a piece of legislation which covers a wide range of issues which the Environment & Leisure Services Department deal with. There may be an opportunity to use new or extended powers set out within this Act in connection with Recycling. However, it must be ascertained whether any new approach is suitable for the City of Durham and aligns with any approach taken by Durham County Council.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the kerb it scheme be promoted by an annual sticker placed on the household waste bins, stating refuse collection times, including details of the kerb-it scheme and relevant contact details at the City of Durham to find out more information regarding recycling.
2. That Residents are made aware of the other options regarding recycling (besides Kerb-It) available within the district i.e. recycling points available within supermarket car parks, facilities available at the County Council Household Waste and Recycling Centres, furniture reuse / refurbishment, home composting and the minimisation of the amount of an individuals own of waste in order to change peoples behaviour towards more environmentally friendly practices e.g. reusing sturdy shopping bags rather than taking plastic carrier bags from supermarkets, buying products that are packaged with relatively easily recyclable materials such as glass and tin.
3. That the provision of a free collection service for bulky items be maintained, subject to further information regarding the on-going viability of these collections being obtained. This recommendation could then be reviewed accordingly by Members.
4. That there is greater communication between the City of Durham, Student Landlords and the University of Durham as regards the extra volumes of waste created at the ends of terms and semesters when students move out and landlords maybe in the process of redecoration and refurbishment. There may be an opportunity via the newly revived County Durham Furniture Forum to set up links that would benefit both landlords (cheap furniture) and Local Authorities (a diversion of the furniture from the waste stream) and to the University (good PR for students is few and far between!).
5. That the City of Durham's align their plans for the green waste collection with the County Council Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for County Durham to ensure that there is no conflict and unnecessary expenditure of resources. Notwithstanding, the City of Durham reaffirms it's commitment to an increased provision of green waste recycling across the district.
6. That the possibility of increasing the number of types of waste that can be collected via Kerb-It is investigated to determine whether:
  - a. The public wish to see cardboard and plastic to be included.
  - b. Whether the inclusion of these types of low density, bulky items can be collected at a sufficiently cost effective means to justify their inclusion.
  - c. Whether including these types of material could help to increase recycling rates as a percentage across the district to meet future targets or whether they would not yield sufficient percentages relative to the resources required.
7. That the City of Durham takes full advantage of any opportunities to help shape any new contracts for the provision of the recycling within the District (currently Premier Waste) that may be included within the County Council's Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for County Durham. Also to ensure the City of Durham is prepared to utilise any facilities that the County Council may provide for disposal / treatment of waste in the future in order to minimise the amount of waste sent to landfill.
8. That the City of Durham supports the Reuse and Refurbishment of furniture and white goods wherever possible within the constraints of limited resources, whether that be by the instigation of schemes similar to those ran in Liverpool, or that is not thought to be viable, by support of the Durham County Furniture Forum.
9. That the Council looks to utilise within its own working practices the best systems to ensure as much non-confidential waste is recycled as possible and that waste is treated wherever possible as a potential resource rather than a by-product of function.

10. That the City of Durham's Environmental Services Department research how best to implement any requisite legislation on Recycling contained within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and that the Panel report back to Cabinet as soon as possible.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Jeff Riddell - Head of Environment & Leisure Services
- ❖ Tom Punton - Environmental Services Manager

## **EXTERNAL WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ John Wade - Waste Business Manager – Durham County Council

## **Scrutiny of Litter Pickers**

### **Relating to Corporate Aim –**

- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Environmentally sensitive
- **Quality Public Services**
  - Well managed value for money services
  - Meeting customer needs
- **Capital City**
  - City for Culture, Recreation & Tourism

Further to discussions regarding the topics of fly-tipping and recycling, Members felt that it would be appropriate to look at the associated subject of litter within the City of Durham district, with a focus on litter pickers.

## **FINDINGS**

- The Council has multi-skilled workers and multi-use vehicles in place, many types of incident can now be dealt with “on-the-spot”, improving turnaround times.
- To help promote litter picking by local environment action groups it may be possible, in addition to the provision of equipment, to also promote such activities via Council media i.e. City of Durham website and Durham City News. Frontline staff i.e. Streetscene Team Leaders, Neighbourhood Wardens.
- In cases where bus shelters are extremely unclean, staff could attend an incident to clean up shelter or in the case of a danger to public health, with Adshel being advised to attend their own shelters, or possibly for the City of Durham to cleanse and recharge.
- With only one machine currently available for the cleaning of footpaths, there has been a requirement to focus resources to those areas with the worst problems. Each “Neighbourhood” has footpaths cleaned 6 or 7 times per year, with this figure being constrained purely by resources.
- Currently Neighbourhood Wardens can issue fixed penalty notices, and it maybe that other frontline staff maybe able to issue them in the future i.e. Street Scene Team Leaders, Environmental Protection Officers etc. This would need to be researched accordingly as regard remits and workloads of these types of Officers and decisions made in due course.

- With the amendment to the definition of BV199 in 2005, chewing gum has now been classified as a form of litter. The City of Durham's Neighbourhood Wardens will be running a scheme similar to that ran for cigarette butts, highlighting this fact and encouraging the public to dispose of used chewing gum considerately. Again, similar to the cigarette campaign, this will be followed up by enforcement and the issuing of fixed penalty notices to people who fail to dispose of the used chewing gum appropriately.
- Whilst there are four specific cigarette bins in the City Centre, extra provision of such facilities was thought to be required.
- In the past the vandalism and burning out of dog foul bins has resulted in an expense for replacement bins, consequently plastic bins were introduced which were a cheaper alternative to the previous metal bins employed.
- Ultimately, education of the public as regarding littering is a more likely to lead to a reduction in the littering with prevention being better than cure.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the City of Durham's Environmental Services Department research how best to implement any requisite legislation regarding litter and litter pickers contained within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and that the Panel report back to Cabinet as soon as possible.
2. That the City of Durham continues to look at the possibility of updating existing litter bins to incorporate insertions to allow for the safe disposal of cigarette butts.
3. That the City of Durham maintains its high standards as regards litter as measured by BV199 and also with regard to the surrounding street scene issues as measured by the relevant LEQs and if possible aim to improve.
4. That in the wider street scene, dog foul bins should be better identified by use of stickers, and also that in key important areas, i.e. the City Centre, Village Centres Tourist spots, more ornate bins are recommended.
5. That the City of Durham's Neighbourhood Wardens continue in their successful series of campaigns highlighting the different types of litter, the appropriate methods of disposal and the consequences of non-compliance, i.e. enforcement. This also includes visits to local schools to help educate the next generation.
6. That when future developments are being considered at the planning stage that, where appropriate and subject to planning procedure, attention is given to the provision of adequate measures for the prevention and tidying of potential litter within the application.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Jeff Riddell - Head of Environment & Leisure Services
- ❖ Tom Punton - Environmental Services Manager
- ❖ Michael Yeadon - Environmental Protection Manager
- ❖ Andrew Jackson - Technical Support Manager

## Scrutiny of Riverbanks (ongoing)

### Relating to Corporate Aim –

- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Environmentally Sensitive
- **Capital City**
  - City for Culture, Recreation & Tourism

The Cathedral and Castle are synonymous with Durham, situated on the peninsula surrounded by the looping River Wear. It was the remit of the Panel to consider the issues relating to the riverbanks and to help clarify the responsibilities of the various stakeholders, and to see how the City of Durham Council contributes to the improvement of the riverbanks currently and what future support could be offered.

### FINDINGS

- The City of Durham is only a small landowner, with the principal landowners in the peninsula area being the Cathedral, the University and University Colleges.
- The 2020 Visioning Exercise and the projects stemming from it will be key in developing the riverbanks further, with the Necklace Park being a prime example.
- The Riverbanks Management Group are the main body for progressing many of the issues facing the riverbanks and this Group would be the appropriate forum at which the City of Durham could influence positive changes.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The report has been approved by the Panel, and is tabled for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

### WITNESSES CONSULTED

- ❖ Jeff Riddell - Head of Environment & Leisure Services
- ❖ Tracey Ingle - Head of Cultural Services
- ❖ Michael Hurlow - Heritage and Design Manager
- ❖ Peter Lee - Street Scene Technical Manager

### EXTERNAL WITNESSES CONSULTED

- ❖ John Williams - Land Agent – Durham Cathedral (Dean and Chapter)
- ❖ Steve Ansdell - Horticultural Manager – Durham University
- ❖ Claire Lancaster - Necklace Park Manager

## Review of Biodiversity

### Relating to Corporate Aim –

- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Environmentally Sensitive
- **Capital City**
  - City for Culture, Recreation & Tourism

The purpose of the review was to bring Members up-to-speed as regards the progress made since the initial scrutiny of the topic.

## **FINDINGS**

- The Council completed a “Parks Audit” based on Green Flag Criteria.
- The maintenance of “Biodiversity Areas” – now called Wildlife Meadows has been refined and improved e.g. contracts are in place with local farmers as regards annual “hay cropping”.
- Some sites will have Yellow Rattle introduced as this species of plant can help to increase the biodiversity value of an area over time.
- Interpretation Panels for the Wildlife Meadows will be produced in consultation with local Residents.
- “Learning Lunches” have been held regarding the subject of the “Natural Environment and its association with Quality of Life”. It was noted that these could be repeated if further interest was received.
- As part of the planning process, the Council’s Sustainable Development Manager reviews applications as regards energy efficiency, transport impact etc.
- The Council has formed a “Green Space Steering Group” and has allocated a budget to this group. Tenders were invited to conduct an “Open Space Needs Assessment” and the North East Community Forest (NECF) was appointed. Consultation with user groups will take place, an audit of provision/quality/value, analysis of under or over provision and review of opportunities for providing new open spaces. Knowledge gained by NECF will be valuable in the future in helping when considering development opportunities as this Assessment will consider all open spaces, not just the sites previously labelled as “biodiversity” areas.
- The establishment of the “Friends of Witton Dene” as a pilot scheme has been well received. It is hoped that a site management plan can be drawn up for Witton Dene and that similar Friends Groups can be set up for other sites across the District.
- Amongst other awards, the City of Durham achieved a special award from Northumbria in Bloom for best biodiversity project. The Council’s large scale ambition and long term goals in this area were considered important factors in securing this award.
- Funding has been awarded from SITA for access improvements to Ponderosa, Holiday Park and Flass Vale.
- Heritage Lottery Fund bids have been applied for Wharton and Bowburn Parks
- Formation of a programme of Friends Groups Establishment – Management Plans – Costs, building up relationships and public confidence is felt to be essential in this regard. Formal site management plans are good evidence and by producing these, it could only help to strengthen any case regarding the obtaining external funding.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the work of the Council’s Sustainable Development Manager and other Officers be continued and built upon and that the subject of Sustainable Development to be considered an important factor in decision making.
2. That Biodiversity sites now be referred to as “Wildlife Meadows”.

3. That the topic of Biodiversity (to be read Sustainable Development) be reviewed in 6 months time.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Jonathan Elmer - Sustainable Development Manager

## **Review of Unauthorised Parking on Council Owned Land**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims –**

- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Environmentally Sensitive
- **Quality Public Services**
  - Meeting customer needs

The Panel was tasked with reviewing the Council's approach to tackling the problem of Unauthorised Parking on Council Owned Land. The topic was scheduled for a "mini-review" in September / October 2006, specifically to look at the procedure for allocations being developed for the provision of additional parking spaces across the District.

The subject was allocated from the Scrutiny Committee to the Environment Panel, the initial proposal for the topic coming from the Chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Panel. The reason for the suggestion being there was an apparent lack of formal policy or procedure when allocating priority to the provision of additional parking.

## **FINDINGS**

- Whilst 38 individual schemes had been identified, to ensure that there was match funding from Durham County Council in appropriate cases, a meeting with Officers from Durham County Council would take place to discuss the list of schemes further.
- Members wondered whether the £50,000 budget from the Housing Revenue Account could be transferred to another account so that scheme in "non-Council house" areas could benefit from the funds. If this was not possible, Members still wished the funds to be utilised to ensure the continued allocation of this fund.
- Due to staff sickness, whilst some progress had been made, further work was required in this regard. Accordingly, Members felt that it was perhaps unfair to judge the new procedures until further developments had been made.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That Members questions regarding to the £50,000 budget (outlined above) be addressed.
2. That a budget of £50,000 be allocated again for the next financial year.
3. The Panel agreed that the subject should be reviewed further in six months time.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ John Westgarth - Senior Engineer
- ❖ Andrew Young - Technical Resources Manager

## **Review of Temporary Road Closures (ongoing)**

### **Relating to Corporate Aim –**

- **Capital City**
  - City for Culture, Recreation & Tourism
- **Quality Public Services**
  - Meeting customer needs

The City Council has the power to temporarily close roads under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 for such events as parades, street parties etc. It was noted that the City did not have a Policy for the granting of such road closures. Consequently, a Policy was drafted, and was adopted by Cabinet, April 2005 (Minute 578).

Members were worried that the cost of organising a temporary road closure, i.e. the cost of insurance and of suitable traffic management, was becoming too expensive for small village organisations to bear and wished to have further information relating to this matter.

### **FINDINGS**

- In 1999 a Public Safety Policy was produced by ACPO setting out the Police position which was to not support any event on the highway unless there had been a risk assessment carried out, there was an appropriate insurance policy in place for the event, and that road closure was obtained with the relevant traffic management being in place.
- The Police would try to have some representation in the form of Community Support Officers or local Beat Officers at an event though the Police may provide assistance at a large event such as the Durham Miners' Gala from a public order standpoint.
- A neighbouring Authority had attempted to help event organisers obtain the relevant qualifications needed to carry out a road closure themselves. It became apparent however, that attending training in itself was not sufficient and that practical ongoing experience was required as well as costly specialist equipment and appropriate signage.
- A sample of a few Traffic Management Companies and Insurers showed that the cost of even a small and short temporary road closure was in the order of £500 for the traffic management and £250 for insurance.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The report has been approved by the Panel, and is tabled for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee in due course.

### **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Clare Greenlay - Legal & Democratic Services Manager



# REPORT OF THE POLICY SCRUTINY PANEL



**Chair – Councillor Mamie Simmons**

**Vice Chair – Councillor David Freeman**

## **Panel Membership for 2006/2007**

**Councillors Cowper, Gibbon, Gill, Hepplewhite, Leake, Norman, Pitts, Syer, Walker and Wynn.**

## **Background**

The Policy Scrutiny Panel began the year by continuing its consideration of the proposed Application Process to be used in relation to applications to the Flourishing Communities Fund. This was followed by an ongoing Scrutiny of the Council's Telephone Communication System subsequent to concerns being raised by Elected Members. The Panel carried out a major study in relation to "Working with Parish Councils", and also the Review of a previous Scrutiny of the Council's levels of Sickness Absence.

The "Members on Line" system was also identified as a suitable topic for Scrutiny and the Policy Scrutiny Panel at its final meeting of the year, agreed the Terms of Reference for this Scrutiny, to be commenced in June 2007.

## **Scrutiny of Flourishing Communities Fund – Application Procedure**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims–**

- **Quality Public Services**
  - Meeting Customer Needs
  
- **Capital City**
  - Enhance Local Economy

## **FINDINGS**

The panel considered written material in relation to the Applications Process and supporting Guidance Notes. Panel Members suggested a number of amendments/additions to the material, for the purposes of increasing clarity for the benefit of Applicants.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The suggested amendments were agreed by the Scrutiny Committee in April, 2006, and the final Report and Recommendations of the Panel were subsequently submitted to Cabinet for approval and adoption.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Mike Thompson – Head of Community Services
- ❖ John Tindale – Economic and Community Development Manager

## **Scrutiny of the Telephone Communications System**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims:–**

- **Quality Public Services**
  - Meeting Customer Needs
  - Accessible services for all

## **FINDINGS**

Members had expressed concern over perceived problems with the Council's Telephone Communication System.

Three general areas were identified and considered:-

- The Monitoring of response times
- Measures to gauge Customer Feedback
- Utilisation of the Voicemail Facility

The Panel gave consideration to a number of aspects in relation to this Scrutiny.

- The technical specification of the system and the background to its purchase and cost
- Functionality of the system, including how calls were queued, grouped, and responded to and problems with "peaks and troughs"
- Staff retention problems that were being experienced
- The lack of consistency of responses across Services. It was apparent that the Best Practice set out in the Customer Care Handbook was not being applied consistently across the Authority.

Members also noted that no formal Benchmarking had been carried out against other Authorities and that a system for the monitoring of response times was in its early stages. Some Customer Feedback had been sought; however this was another area which was to be further developed.

Members also raised concerns regarding how the Voicemail facility was not being utilised properly and that considerable difficulty had been experienced by them in receiving responses to Voicemail messages left for Officers in certain Services.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members requested that Quarterly Progress Reports be brought back to the Panel.

The Panel also made eight Recommendations, for approval by the Scrutiny Committee and submission to Cabinet.

The Report and Recommendations were agreed by the Scrutiny Committee in July, 2006, but were subsequently referred back to the Panel by the Cabinet, for further consideration.

## **UPDATE REPORT**

A further Progress Report was subsequently brought to the Panel in October, 2006.

Members were briefed on progress made and their further concerns were addressed. Members noted progress but requested that Performance Indicators be drawn up in relation to response times to calls, to allow for comparison to actual response times.

The Panel also requested a further Update Report on progress in the Spring/Summer of 2007.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Ron Henderson – Head of HR
- ❖ Mike Thompson – Head of Community Services
- ❖ Marion Goodrick – Customer Services Manager
- ❖ Susan Womersley – Assistant Customer Services Manager

## **Working with Parish Councils**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims–**

- **Quality Public Services**
  - Well managed value for money services
  - Meeting customer needs
  - Accessible services for all

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

## **FINDINGS**

Members considered three general areas in relation to this Scrutiny.

- Relations with Local Councils
- Joint Charters
- Quality Council Status

### **Relations with Local Councils**

The Executive Officer of the County Durham Association of Local Councils attended the Panel and gave a background to the support currently available to Parish Councils.

Members were informed of initiatives which had been included in the Government's Rural White Paper in 2000. It was suggested that Principal Authorities could support Local Councils by taking the lead in any development of a Joint Charter and involving them in any discussions or negotiations regarding its formation. The County Association would in turn encourage Local Councils to participate fully in the formation of a Charter. It was also involved in seeking the re-establishment of the Durham City Association of Local Council's Committee.

## **Joint Charters**

In 2003, initial consultations with Parish Councils had been begun by the City Council's Director of Legal and Administration Services and a Model Charter circulated to Parish Councils to test levels of interest in formally pursuing its development. No further progress had been made.

The Panel was attended by representatives of Durham County Council and Durham Rural Community Council who set out the background of the recent development of a Joint Charter between Durham County Council, District of Easington and the Town and Parish Councils within Easington's administrative area.

Members were further appraised of the possible benefits both to Principal Authorities and to Parish Councils following the establishment of a Joint Charter.

Durham Rural Community Council was now involved in the development of Joint Charters and it was their intention to examine how best to build and incorporate Charters into Local Development Frameworks.

## **Quality Council Status**

Representatives of Peterlee Town Council, Horden Parish Council and the National Association of Local Councils attended the Panel to discuss the issues and requirements involved in Quality Council status.

Members were made aware of the criteria to be met to enable a Local Council to achieve Quality status. There were seven criteria, some mandatory, some partly discretionary. Most had significant resource issues for the Local Council.

The Panel were advised as to the advantages both to the Principal Authority and to the Local Council of the achievement of Quality Status and examples were given of practical assistance which could be made available to the Local Council by the Principal Authority.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Policy Scrutiny Panel concluded their consideration of the three elements of this Scrutiny, namely; Current Support Available, Joint Charters and Quality Council Status. A Report, which contained six Recommendations relating primarily to these three elements, was subsequently drawn up for submission to the Scrutiny Committee. The Report and Recommendations were agreed by the Scrutiny Committee in March, 2007, and will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

The Panel further recognised however, that the Report and Recommendations should enable the initiation of enhanced partnership working with Parish Councils. Members acknowledged that more work needed to be done in relation to establishing the need for structured, long term support by the City of Durham for the Parish Councils within its area.

It was agreed therefore to view the Report as a working document, to review progress on this issue during 2007, and to give consideration as to whether further exploration needed to be carried out of the wider issues involved.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Lesley Blackie – Director of Legal and Administration Services

## **EXTERNAL WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Steven Ragg – Executive Officer, National Association of Local Councils
- ❖ Lesley Swinbank – Regional Development Officer, National Association of Local Councils
- ❖ Liz Charles – Durham Rural Community Council
- ❖ Ann Armstrong – Corporate Policy Officer, Durham County Council
- ❖ Samantha Shippen – Clerk to Horden Parish Council
- ❖ Cllr. Bill Jeffrey – Leader, Peterlee Town Council
- ❖ John Arthur – Clerk to Peterlee Town Council

## **Review of Sickness Absence**

### **Relating to Corporate Aims –**

- **Quality Public Services**
  - Well managed value for money services
- **Flourishing Communities**
  - Health and Well-being

## **FINDINGS**

The original Report of the Policy Panel on the Scrutiny of this topic had been accepted by Cabinet in October, 2005, with a Recommendation to review in twelve months time. The Panel subsequently, in October, 2006, reviewed the Scrutiny and the progress made towards implementation of the Recommendations.

Members noted progress on most of the Recommendations, however a new Staff Attitude Survey, requested by the Panel from April, 2006, had not been carried out.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members recommended that a new Staff Attitude Survey be carried out, the results of which, together with the current level of Sickness Absence, be reported back to the Policy Scrutiny Panel in June, 2007.

## **WITNESSES CONSULTED**

- ❖ Ron Henderson – Head of Human Resources

# Scrutiny of the Members Online System

Relating to Corporate Aim –

- **Quality Public Services**
  - Well managed value for money services

## **ONGOING SCRUTINY**

Members had identified the new Members on Line System as a suitable topic for Scrutiny.

Panel Members scoped the parameters of the Scrutiny and at the Panel meeting in March, 2007, identified detailed Terms of Reference.

The Scrutiny will commence in the Summer of 2007.

The Chair and Members of the Policy Scrutiny Panel would like to take this opportunity to express their thanks to all Witnesses, both Council Officers and External Witnesses who have assisted and advised Members over the past year and also to those non Panel Members, who have contributed to the Panel's deliberations.

## **SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS**

### **Council Procedure Rules Working Group**

The Council Procedure Rules Working Group originally reported their findings to the Council in 2005. Their report, however, was referred back for further consideration.

The Working Group was reconvened and continued to meet during 2006/2007.

The final report of the Working Group was subsequently presented to Council in February, 2007.

## **ADDITIONAL MEETINGS**

The February, 2007, meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was set aside for discussion of the proposed Annual Budget for 2007/2008.

All Members were invited to the Meeting and members of OMT were also in attendance.

Members were given a detailed breakdown of the proposed Annual Budget by the Director of Strategic Resources and the Head of Financial Services.

Questions from Members, arising from the discussion, were responded to by OMT Officers.

## **SCRUTINY STATISTICS**

Statistical information in relation to Scrutiny Business for 2006/2007 is attached for the benefit of Members. It is the intention to further develop the analysis of this and other information in order to establish for City of Durham Scrutiny, realistic Performance Indicators which will be reported in future Annual Reports.

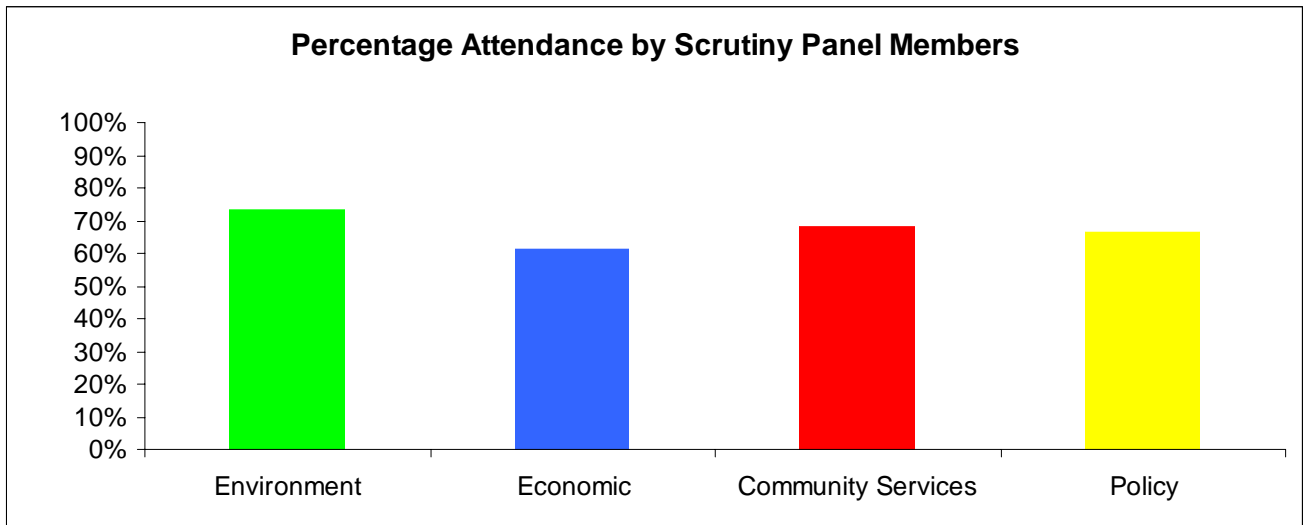
**In total, for the year 2006/2007, 15 Scrutiny Reports were submitted to Cabinet for consideration.**

**The number of Witnesses attending Scrutiny Panel Meetings throughout the year was as follows:-**

**Internal Witnesses (The Council's own Officers) – 22**

**External Witnesses – 20**

## PERCENTAGE ATTENDANCE AT SCRUTINY PANELS –



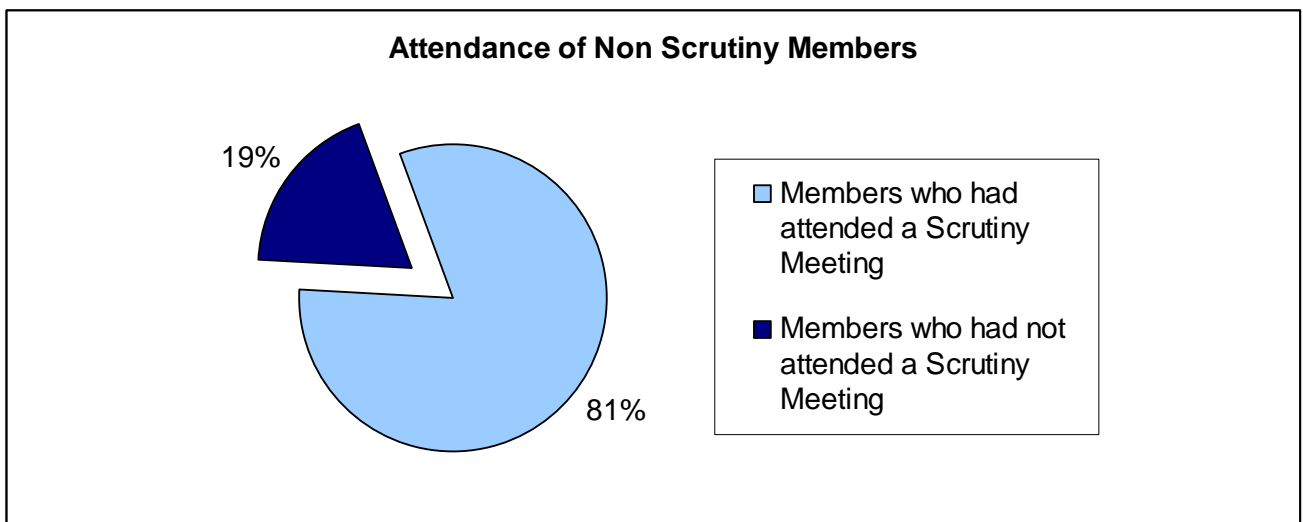
Attendance by Members of City of Durham Scrutiny Panels has been consistently high. The following is an example of relative attendance:-

City of Durham – 06/07 average 68%

Tameside (who hold a Charter Mark for Scrutiny) – 04/05 average 58%

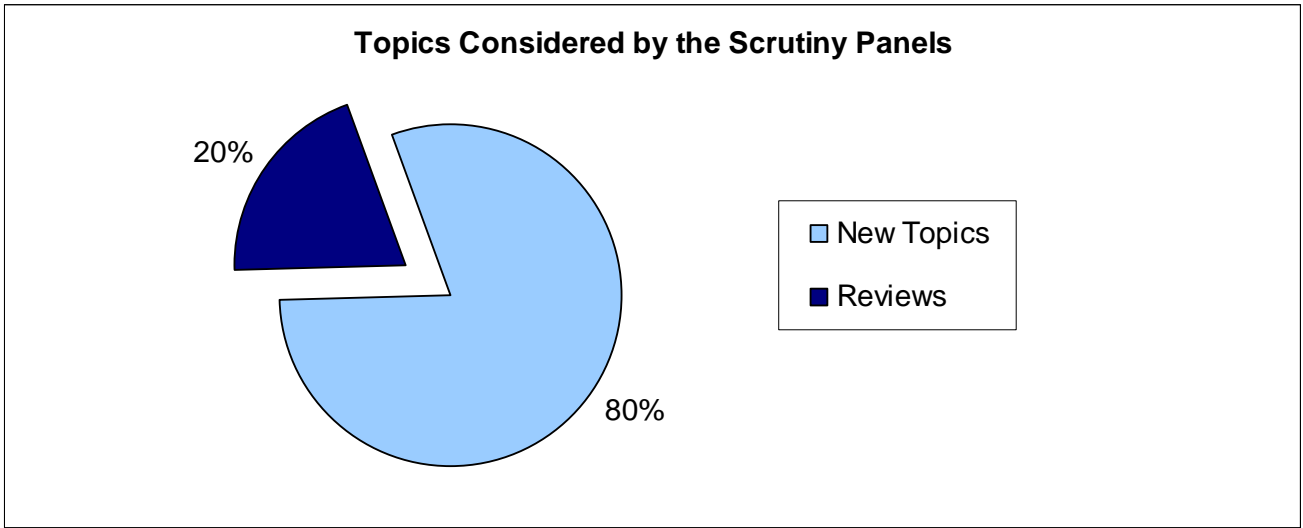
In the majority of cases details of Scrutiny Attendance are not included in Annual Scrutiny Reports.

## ATTENDANCE AT SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS BY NON-PANEL MEMBERS –

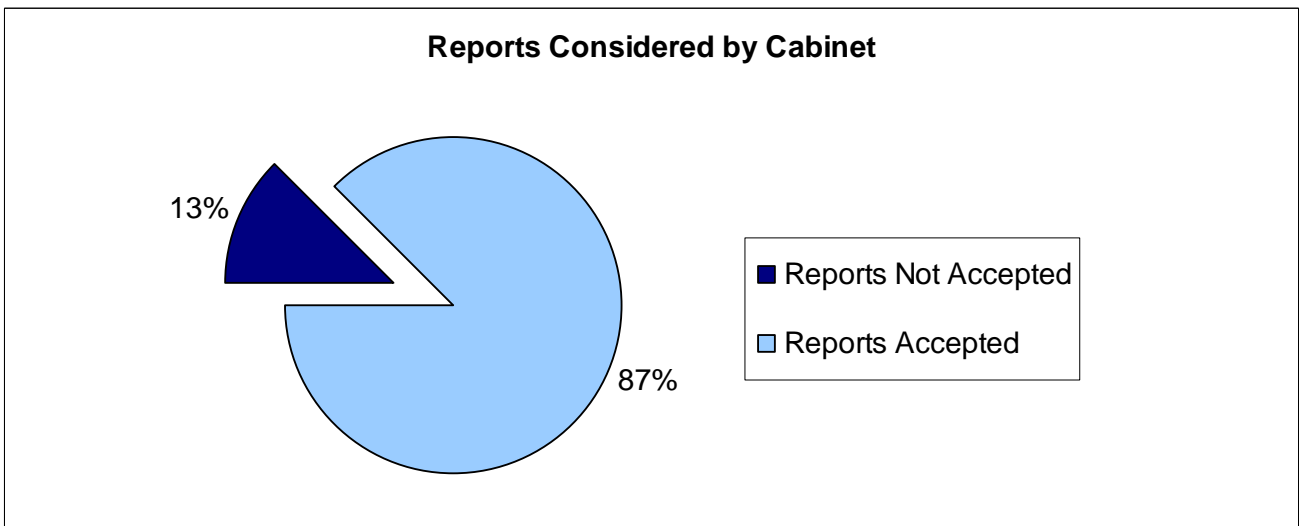




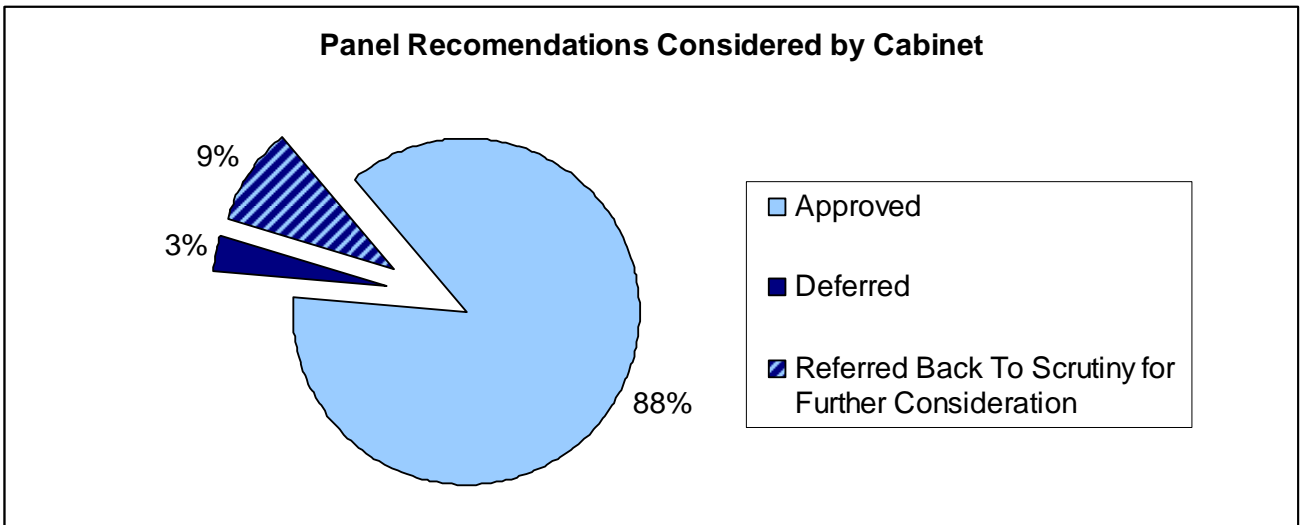
**TOPICS CONSIDERED BY SCRUTINY PANELS –**



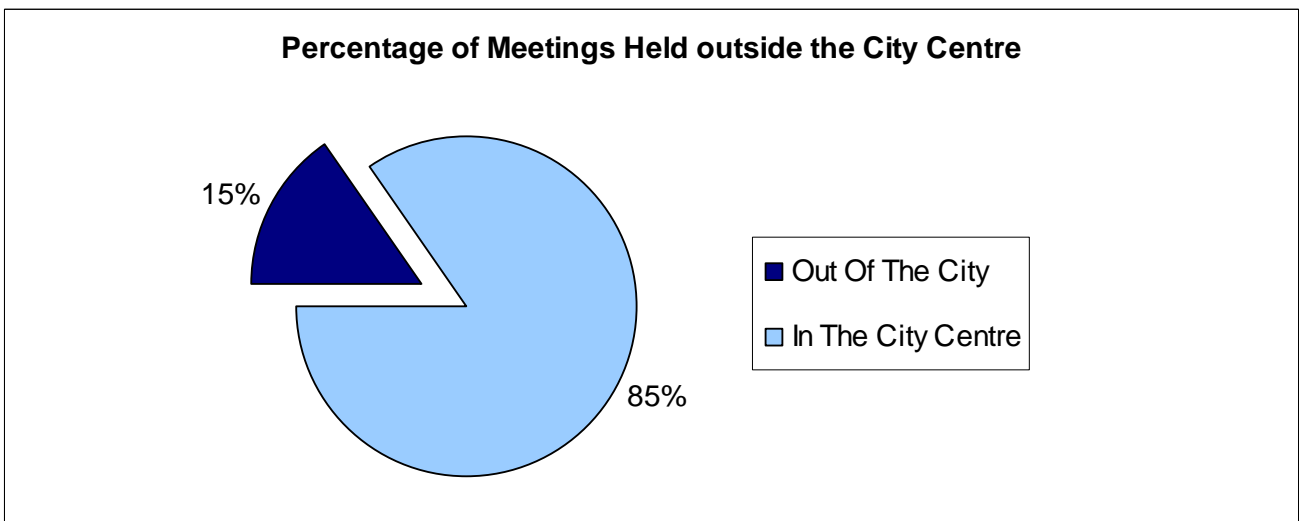
**PANEL REPORTS CONSIDERED BY CABINET –**



## PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS CONSIDERED BY CABINET –



## NUMBER OF PANEL MEETINGS HELD AWAY FROM CITY CENTRE –



This measurement was suggested due to the close of the Town Hall for refurbishment. However, the figure will be used as a Benchmark to develop a future Scrutiny Performance Indicator in relation to the number of Scrutiny Panel Meetings taken into the Community.

## 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 Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 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 Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2007.

Topic	Decision Maker	Target Date for Decision to be made	Consultees (if any)	Contacts	Background Documents
Local Development Framework (LDF) Development Control and Planning for Our Heritage Policies – Preferred Options – Development Plan Documents	* Cabinet	July, 2007	Numerous Consultees	Head of Planning Services Tel: 0191 3018701	Issues and Alternative options Papers, Oct. '06 Consultation Responses
Review of the Fraud Policy	* Cabinet	July, 2007	Numerous Consultees	Head of Internal Audit Tel: 0191 3018607	To be determined
Climate Change Report	* Cabinet	July, 2007	Numerous Consultees	Head of Environmental Services Tel: 0191 3018684	To be determined
Transport Policy	* Cabinet	July, 2007	Numerous Consultees	Head of Environmental Services Tel: 0191 3018684	To be determined
Regional Spatial Strategy	* Cabinet	July, 2007	Numerous Consultees	Head of Planning Services Tel: 0191 3018701	Consultation Document issued by Government Office North East
Procurement Strategy	* Cabinet	July, 2007	Numerous Consultees	Director of Strategic Resources Tel: 0191 3018596	To be determined

\***Cabinet Members:** Councillors Bell, Dickie, Jackson, Pitts, Rae, Reynolds, Southwell, Thomson, van Zwanenberg & Woods

**Publication Date:** Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2007

**Effective Date:** Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2007.

Councillor F. Reynolds  
Leader of the Council  
Forward Plan No. 62

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****27 July 2007****DECISIONS TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO MEMBERS**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Portfolio Member</b>	<b>Nature of Decision</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Councillor Southwell	Application received from Ms Bright, PDSA enquiring if the Council would make a donation of £50 in order for them to provide free veterinary care to sick & injured animals for pet owners within the DH1-6 area if owners are in receipt of Housing & Council Tax benefit. Recommend a donation of %50 to be made for financial year 2007/08	15.5.07
2	Councillor Southwell	Application received from County Durham Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted for a donation to help support its talking newspaper which is circulated to over 700 blind and partially sighted listeners across County Durham. Recommend that a donation of £100 be made to the Society for financial year 2007/2008	18.05.07
3	Councillor Reynolds	Application to allow free coach parking in the City Centre Coach Park for the Summer Festival Weekend, 7 and 8 July 2007 Recommend application be approved	30.5.07
4	Councillor Reynolds	Application to allow free coach parking in the City Centre Coach Park for the Christmas Festival Weekend 1 and 2 December 2007 Recommend application be approved	30.5.07
5	Councillor Reynolds	Application has been received from Mr Stuart Myers of 5 Mary Terrace, Bowburn enquiring if the Council would consider selling to him land adjacent to his property, which currently forms part of the garden of 30 Bede Terrace, Bowburn. The tenant has no objections and the land is to be used for construction of a double garage and a private domestic garden. Recommend that the application is approved.	24.5.07
6	Councillor Reynolds	Award of a grant of £4,995.28 to Sherburn O.A.K. from Flourishing Communities (Small Grants) Fund for installation of new signage and the supply & installation of a picnic table at Sherburn Park Recommend approval of grant	06.6.07
7	Councillor Reynolds	Award of a grant of £1,000 to the Art Garden Society from the Flourishing Communities (Small Grants) Fund for an Exhibition & Festival at the Durham Botanic Gardens. Recommend approval of grant on condition that the Art Garden Society is able to raise further funds of £1,660 from local businesses and/or fund raising events	06.6.07
8	Councillor Reynolds	Award of a grant of £1,000 to Finchale Training College Nature Trail from the Flourishing	06.6.07

		Communities (Small Grants) Fund for the provision of a Natural Trail. Recommend approval of grant on condition that the College can raise the majority of funding (£16,279) from other courses by December 2007 and that the project is completed by Easter 2008	
9	Councillor Reynolds	Award of a grant of £5,000 to Coxhoe Community Partnership from the Flourishing Communities (Small Grants) Fund for the supply and installation of a metal fence around the perimeter of Coxhoe Park to make it a safer and more managed space. Recommend the award of a grant of £5,000	15.6.07
10	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Mrs Thereza Bittencourt-Robson of 22 Ridding Road, Esh Winning enquiring if the Council would consider granting vehicular access over Council owned land to the front of her property. The access point would be such that a car parking bay would be sterilised. Recommend that the application is approved.	12.6.07
11	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Mr & Mrs Field of Hollyfield Properties (4 Durham Road, Esh Winning) enquiring if the Council would wish to dispose of Council owned property – 5 Holly Park, Ushaw Moor. Recommend that the application is approved.	12.6.07
12	Councillor Reynolds & B Spears	Application received in respect of attendance at Planning Summer School at Swansea University, Wales on 31 August to 4 September 2007 from Cllr Mrs M Simmons and Dr M Norman Application is approved	15.6.07 8.6.07
13	Councillor Reynolds	Sale of land at 48 Green Crescent Coxhoe. The Council has previously agreed to dispose of a 164 sq metre site to a Mr Jackson of 48 Green Crescent Coxhoe for garden use only. The site was valued by the Council's agent and the open market value was given as £2132.00. Mr Jackson has now made various representations in respect of the valuation and has offered the sum of £1,000 and the council is being asked to consider selling the site at this price. Recommended to agree to dispose of the site for £1,000 with Mr Jackson bearing the council's usual valuation and legal fees.	18.6.07
14	Councillor Reynolds	To award the contract for the works at the Town Hall, Market Place, Durham. A number of companies were requested to submit tenders for the work to be carried out and it was recommended that Vest Construction, whose tender was in the amount of £754,006 be awarded the contract to carry out the work	18.6.07
15	Councillor Reynolds	Application to purchase land adjoining 22 Lime Park Brandon received from Dr Wael Ellabban & Mrs Aziza Zaher for use for garden land and to	22.6.07

		keep rubbish from accumulating in the area. Recommended that the application be refused.	
16	Councillor Rae	An application has been received from IML concerts asking for the closure of the riverside footpaths for the Jools Holland concert on Saturday 28 July 2007. The closure would be from 4 pm to 12.00 midnight. Recommended that the closure of the said riverside footpaths or part thereof on Saturday 28 July be approved and the Chief Executive be authorised to take the necessary steps to fulfil the legal requirements of Section 7 of the Durham City Council Act 1985 in this connection and the organisers pay the costs involved in advertising the closure.	28.6.07
17	Councillor Thomson	To authorise costs of £7728.40 in relation to advertising the existing Strategic Care Manager vacancy. Recommended that the post of Strategic Care Manager be advertised and filled in the normal way to continue this high quality adaptation service to the tenants of City of Durham	29.6.07
18	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Mr Crisp of 1 Meldon Avenue, Sherburn Village to purchase land at the rear of 1 Meldon Avenue in order to extend his garden Recommend that the application be refused	29.6.07
19	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from the Clerk to Shadforth Parish Council for permission to locate Parish Notice Board on land adjoining Ludworth Community Centre. Recommend that the application be approved	29.6.07
20	Councillor Reynolds	Application received from Pitlington Primary School via Durham County Council enquiring if the Council would consider transferring land adjacent to Pitlington Primary School field at a peppercorn consideration or at a nil rent to create a discrete environmental and wildlife area. Recommend that the application be refused and the land be retained by the Council as public open space.	05.7.07