

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of the **Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham** on **Thursday 5 April 2018 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor A Batey (Chairman)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors E Adam, J Atkinson, J Clare, M Clarke, R Crute, T Henderson, P Howell, P Jopling, L Maddison, J Maitland, R Manchester, L Taylor and M Wilson

**Co-opted Members:**

Mr T Batson

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Davinson, D Hall, R Ormerod, A Patterson, A Reed, E Scott and P Sexton.

**2 Substitute Members**

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

**3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held 26 February 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**5 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

## **6 Media Relations**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Diane Close referred Members to the recent prominent articles and news stories relating to the remit of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

The articles included: new IT jobs created with Waterstons' moving to Aykley Heads; the opening of the £7.4m science and technology park development at NetPark, Sedgefield, the Explorer facilities houses laboratories and offices for firms to scale up work as they target global growth; and Durham had been named as one of the top 10 cities for claiming Research and Development tax relief.

### **Resolved:**

That the presentation be noted.

## **7 Tourism Marketing Activity Undertaken by Visit County Durham (VCD) Scrutiny Review Report - Update on progress of recommendations**

The Chairman introduced the Managing Director, Visit County Durham (VCD), Michelle Gorman who was in attendance to give an update as regards the progress of recommendations from the Tourism Marketing Activity Undertaken by Visit County Durham Scrutiny Review Report (for copy see file of minutes).

The Managing Director, VCD referred Members to the report set out in the agenda pack and noted she would explain the key elements. She noted that in relation to raising profile via partnership activities that "The Discover England Fund" was a world class product being delivered, and the Government had announced the programme with £40 million of funding in 2016. It was noted VCD was a partner in 3 large scale bids: England's Historic Cities – the Collection (£1.6 million); Manchester Gateway Project (£1.5 million); and the East of England Touring route – A1 (£1.4 million). Members were informed of the North East Tourism Alliance and a list of partners, including Local Authorities, Visit England and Visit Britain amongst others.

The Committee noted that in terms of strategic destination marketing, VCD worked in partnership with strategic partners and tourism businesses, with two major campaigns: heritage / history in Spring; and outdoor activity in Autumn. It was noted the main aims were to: raise the national profile and appeal of the county; encourage overnight stays, to increase spend; raise season occupancy; and to raise awareness of distinctive Durham experiences.

Members noted promotional activities in relation to the Heritage and Outdoor campaigns, with the impact that had been made, with 2.6 million impressions in relation to the heritage online content hub, and with Anita Rani from the BBC programme Countryfile featuring in promotional videos for outdoor campaigns, noting the variety of landscapes in the County from the Dales through to the Heritage Coast. Councillors noted the Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and their first stargazing festival, which could be developed in terms of encouraging overnight stays.

The Managing Director, VCD noted the links in terms of transport and travel partners, as well as destination performance, with meetings with strategic partners (including the Port of Tyne) and Durham Cathedral and Bowes Museum featuring in the top four destinations for cruise ship passengers, an economic value of £806 million, up by 2% on 2015. Members noted a further breakdown of performance in 2016, including a 3% increase in visitor numbers from 2015 and a split of 93% day visitors and 7% overnight stays. It was noted that a 1% increase in day visitors since 2015 was disappointing, despite marketing campaigns, noting the need to help increase the number of places to stay and provide a critical mass in terms of more visitor products. Members understood the limited budget and the competition in terms of more established tourism brands such as Yorkshire, Cumbria and Scotland.

The Managing Director, VCD informed Members of the issues in terms of Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings and the work undertaken in restructuring VCD in order to meet such demands, including looking to be more commercial with "Membership-lite", to bring income back into the budget. It was explained that the VCD website continued to go from strength-to-strength with over 1 million unique visitors, with the largest change being now around 50% of all traffic came from mobile devices. Members were informed of a pitch for Durham in relation to the James Martin "Great British Adventures" television series. The Committee were reminded of the continued promotion of our local events, such as Lumiere, the Durham book Festival, the Bishop Auckland Food Festival and Kynren amongst others.

The Managing Director, VCD explained in terms of championing the tourism / visitor economy: the draft regional "Case for Tourism", from the North East Tourism Alliance; tourism in 2016 having contributed £3.4 billion to the economy of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area; and tourism in the North East employing more than 55,000 people. It was explained that there were three key roles in terms of driving the regional economy forward: the resilience of the sector provides consistency during difficult economic periods; tourism creates employment; and tourism develops a positive image to encourage people to live, work and invest in the North East.

The Chairman thanked the Managing Director, VCD and asked what the current staffing arrangements were at VCD.

The Managing Director, VCD noted there were 16 members of staff, 2 casual and 1 part-time. The Chairman added that what was achieved with that level of staffing was excellent and it was reassuring that issues that had been previously raised at Committee, such as marketing at the Port of Tyne, had been addressed and thanked the Managing Director for this.

Councillor R Crute noted the positive picture together with the challenging background and asked how resilient the sector was in the longer term. Councillor R Crute noted a 7% overnight stay and commented that increasing overnight stays is key in being able to capture the most spend, however, with austerity and budget cuts he asked how resilient the North East and County Durham were in the longer term. The Managing Director, VCD noted that she began working at VCD in 2006, prior to the economic downturn in 2008. She noted at that point, in 2006, there was an upward trajectory and in 2008 it fell a few percent and then levelled off. She added that in 2013/14 there was a 1% growth.

Members were reminded of the closure of One North East, and noted the current steady position. The Managing Director, VCD noted that Brexit presented another unknown, although as only 2% of international visitors come to the North East, this might not have as much impact as in other parts of the country.

It was added that many in the UK had chosen to stay and holiday in the UK, with national campaigns having worked in this regard. She noted that there was further information to come from Government, such as the Industrial Strategy and Tourism Deal, with the North East working on a Tourism Zone bid.

Councillor P Jopling noted she was interested in how we measured partnerships and success for Durham. Councillor P Jopling noted a lot of building work taking place in Durham City and a number of shops have vacated the city centre and asked what there was in terms of promoting any retail offer. The Managing Director, VCD explained that this was an element that was promoted, however, the decline of retail was a national trend, with pressures from online shopping and large out-of-town retail parks. She added that it was for High Streets to reinvent themselves, likely with less large chain stores and more independent shops. The Managing Director, VCD noted that Adam Deathe from the Durham City Business Improvement District (BID) worked on a retail strategy, with some input from VCD and developers in Durham in respect of retail for the future. Councillor P Jopling noted she felt the scale of development in Durham City was positive and that many that had left the city centre may come to see their move as short-sighted.

Mr T Batson agreed with the Chairman that the work of VCD was excellent and noted, in his time as a Co-opted Member of the Committee, he had seen how the work of VCD had developed and he felt it was incredible. Mr T Batson noted that County Durham was mostly rural and that Durham County Council was a Local Planning Authority. He asked whether the policies and strategies from a planning aspect were suitable to help Durham succeed in terms of tourism, noting that there was a need for Officers' support otherwise there would be a negative response commercially in terms of investment. The Managing Director, VCD noted that VCD worked with Planning colleagues, including the Planning Development Manager, Stephen Reed, who provided excellent support. She added that the Durham Tourism Management Plan was the strategy for VCD and Planners referred to this when looking at tourism development. The Managing Director, VCD noted there was a dedicated development post within the VCD team that commented on all relevant development and there was an internal working group, with colleagues from Planning, Clean and Green, Rights of Way that was very useful in considering and tackling issues.

Councillor L Maddison thanked the Managing Director, VCD for a very good presentation and for the feedback in relation to the Port of Tyne and partnership working. She added that when members had previously raised questions in relation to the destination of passengers from the Port of Tyne it was stated that there was not much interest at that time in Beamish and not much emphasis on Locomotion. Councillor L Maddison asked when the Top 4 destinations from the Port of Tyne were promoted, was a route map used, which could then also indicate what other attractions were in our region and our County, including distances and travel times to help link into our city and town centres, for example linking from the Bowes Museum to Locomotion and from Durham Cathedral to Beamish. Councillor L Maddison noted a need to advertise nationally and in relation to the economy there was a need to focus on increasing the percentage of overnight stays.

The Managing Director, VCD noted that there was a move to a more itinerary based approach providing links with 2 day itineraries, setting out where to eat, stay and visit.

The Chairman noted that there was a difference between Beamish Museum and Beamish Village and that this should be made clear when promoting the museum.

Councillor J Atkinson asked as regards joined up communication, noting a recent site visit where businesses had said that they were struggling to find time to communicate any concerns/issues that they had to those that could provide the necessary support. The Managing Director, commented that VCD provides opportunities for businesses to engage with them via two conferences each year, a number of networking events and drop-in sessions. Councillor J Atkinson noted that those businesses spoken to as part of the site visit did not seem to be aware of this. The Chairman noted this linked to the work of the Retail Support Working Group. The Managing Director, VCD noted a presentation had been held at the Guild in question, however, there was a capacity issue in that there were over 850 tourism businesses and 3 members of staff to service this. She reiterated that there was a weekly e-newsletter as well as the two conferences, summer networking events and drop-in sessions.

Councillor J Clare noted that Locomotion and the associated town centre of Shildon were deemed to be separate, similarly with Beamish Museum and nearby towns and the Bowes Museum and Barnard Castle. He asked how those associated towns could capture visitors to those attractions to maximise spend in those areas. The Chairman noted from recent visits to London that visitor maps included advertisement around the outside alongside discounts and further information.

**Resolved:**

That the report, presentation and progress with recommendations from the Scrutiny Review Report be noted.

## **8      Digital Durham Programme and Related Projects**

The Chairman introduced the Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure, Steve Hodgson who was in attendance to give an update as regards the Digital Durham Programme and related projects (for copy see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted the objective of Digital Durham was “to ensure that Durham is at the forefront of digital connectivity, including fixed line broadband, wireless and mobile”. It was explained that in the future: all forms of economic activity would require some form of connectivity; businesses would be technology led; ubiquitous coverage would be required to enable consistent high quality access to public services, learning, employment, healthcare, data and entertainment; and there would be an expectation that services would be available at any time and from any location.

The Committee were informed as regards what work was ongoing in terms of Digital Durham, the partnership between ten Local Authorities, with Contract One delivering 504 structures, with 105,000 properties having fibre-based connections, 89,000 being superfast, with a take up of 44%. It was noted Contract Two would deliver 220 structures to be delivered by September 2018, 162 completed to date. It was added that this would represent 28,000 properties with a fibre-based connection, 25,000 being superfast. It was projected that there would be 97% coverage over the programme area, with 98% in Durham. Members noted there was planning ongoing in terms of future phases.

The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure explained as regards work ongoing in terms of wireless and mobile broadband and the support for business at business centres such as Consett, Tanfield, NETPark and companies such as Atom Bank, Waterstons, and housing organisations including the County Durham Housing Group, Chapter Homes and Karbon Homes.

It was explained that Councillors could help in terms of issues such as provision of services in the less cost-effective locations, such as rural areas, and the Local Full Fibre Network Programme. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted that in some cases political pressure can help to make developers and providers meet their obligations in terms of broadband provision, citing examples within the County.

Councillors noted the importance of digital skills, “to ensure that Durham has a skilled populace that is able to take the opportunities presented by digital technologies”, and the North East Combined Authority (NECA) digital skills initiative included 150 different initiatives and opportunities for learning being identified, with over 40% being within Durham. Members noted the importance of developing underrepresented areas, for example through “Women in Tech”, and supporting young people via the apprenticeship levy. Members noted events such as Dynamo North East and Hackathons, engaging with our regional Universities.

The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted another important area was Open Data, with an objective “to ensure that Durham is a lead player in the drive for open data”. It was explained to Members that there was a huge value in the data created by organisations and the Council had vast quantities of data that could be used to create new products, services and new value. Members noted there would be a need to gather data appropriately and store it securely, share our data, and to also use data provided by other organisations. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure explained in terms of the Open Data project there were 35 data sets live on “Data Mill North”, with over 400 in total. Organisations that were worked with included: the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Durham BID, Business Durham and the Digital and Satellite Catapults. It was noted the NECA Digital Leads Group were looking to map all data and “internet of things” initiatives across the region.

The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure concluded by noting: the access to technology and digital services was important to sustainable economic development; the Council and partners were investing resources in infrastructure, skills and data; the Council and partners were working locally, regionally, nationally and internationally; and the Council was developing a new Digital Strategy.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure and asked Members for their questions and comments.

Councillor J Clare noted that he felt it was a must to have broadband connectivity seen as an essential service at the planning phase, similar to water and electricity supplies, and looked to the new National Planning Policy Framework as regards this. He added he was very interested in public wifi, especially for his area, namely Newton Aycliffe and asked what he would need to do, and indeed other Councillors, to secure this for our town centres.

The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted his team was the point of contact as regards this and noted the provision could be provided via radio transmitters hung from buildings, citing Barnard Castle as an example. He explained there could be various options in terms of what could be accessed via any service provided by the Council, however, the issue would be where the money would come from whether a development programme, Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) or Government funding. Councillor J Clare asked for an estimate in terms of costs, for example at Barnard Castle as described. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted approximately £300 per year, per access point, and the cost of any maintenance. He added that there were advantages to this method as it did not require roads to be dug up, and the technology was improving.

The Chairman asked why Stanley had received such wifi while other town centres had not. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted that there was some work undertaken by his team in terms of scoping for wifi provision in Stanley however there was no installation and noted that he could provide additional information in relation to the cost of wifi provision.

Councillor E Adam noted a lot of good work, though focused in our town centres. He noted, linking to the previous item from VCD and our rural economy, the need for broadband provision, however, there seemed to be a lack of impetus and many businesses need such provision in order to develop. Councillor E Adam noted on page 31 the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and asked what impact there was in terms of delivering broadband speeds in our rural communities. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted this was an issue and reminded Members that Digital Durham was a Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport funded programme and focused on the most coverage for the lowest costs and achieving value for money. He added the provision in rural areas was more costly and the last 2% may struggle to be fulfilled. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure reiterated that there was a bid for RDPE funding and to focus on gain share in rural areas, and added that the programme should have started with hard to reach areas first as the providers would have done the installation in the easier to reach areas. He noted that for Phase 3 it may be possible to develop our own procurement, noting provision in Forrest-in-Teesdale. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted a need for prioritisation of rural areas and that Members' support in this regards would be important.

Councillor L Maddison asked how new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was being managed in relation to the work of Digital Durham. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted that in terms of policy for the Council, this was being dealt with by Corporate Communications, and in terms of ICT this was being dealt with by the Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure. He added it was a hot topic across the Authority with a lot of training and a working group established to steer the authority through the various requirements. Councillor L Maddison asked if the Authority was on target for day one, the Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted this was the case.

Councillor T Henderson noted a recent site visit to Barnard Castle and noted that an issue raised was IT issues and broadband connectivity, with some part of the town not getting any service. He asked how could the provision be extended in the south and west. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted Digital Durham worked in relation to the provision of superfast broadband. He reiterated that rural geographies were difficult in terms of provision, with service providers looking for value for money and return on their investment.

The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted that perhaps if there was a groundswell of opinion, and a large number of requests, this may help the case for such provision in those areas. Councillor T Henderson thanked the Officer and asked for further information, the Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted he would be more than happy to speak to Members as regards any issues in their local areas and can do a survey providing an analysis of where services are needed.

The Chairman noted the Council had plans to relocate County Hall and also look to embrace new ways of working, utilising home-working where appropriate and noted that it was important that there was good broadband connectivity for all to help enable this, including other businesses, and for children being able to access and complete homework online. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted that the ability for Council employees to access services remotely had been tested during the recent extreme weather and work was being undertaken to boost the capacity.

Councillor P Howell noted that businesses in Barnard Castle had noted challenges in terms of being able to maximise opportunities such as developing an “app” for the town without the necessary connectivity and asked if there was anywhere we could refer people to in order to understand timescales in terms of the roll out of broadband provision. He cited other examples at Newton Aycliffe and the new business park and associated housing developments across the County. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted there was forward planning, however, within contracts it was stipulated that they could only be disclosed 2 months ahead of roll out. He added once disclosed then there would be the usual stickers placed on the telephone boxes, posters and leaflets distributed in order to stimulate demand in the area. The Chairman noted the Committee felt that the non-disclosure was unhelpful and asked that this was fed back.

Councillor J Atkinson noted that the money saved by having good broadband provision was significant and that the technology was required to support the economy in the longer term.

Mr T Batson noted that it may also be preferable to have fibre provided to businesses, not simply fibre to the “green boxes”. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted there were many factors in terms of broadband provision and speed, with issues of contention, congestion and increasing capacity in the background.

Councillor L Maddison noted 5G provision and asked if such technology required a separate telecommunications mast. The Strategic Manager – Applications and Infrastructure noted that 5G would provide higher capacity, though operated over shorter distances and therefore this would require additional masts.

**Resolved:**

That the report and presentation be noted.

## **9      Quarter 3, 2017/18 Revenue and Capital Outturn**

The Chairman introduced the Principal Accountant, Paul Raine to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter 3 Revenue and Capital Outturn 2017/18 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Accountant reminded Members of the areas reported upon, the General Fund Revenue Account, and the Capital Programme for the Regeneration and Local Services (ReAL) Service. Members noted the service was reporting a cash limit underspend of approximately £0.992 million at Quarter 3 2017/18, against a revised General Fund Revenue Budget of £26.866 million. Members noted the major variances were set out within the report and that the service grouping was on track to maintain spending within the cash limit and more details were contained within Appendix 2 to the report.

As regards the Capital Programme, the Principal Accountant explained that the budget now stood at £40.668 million, with a breakdown of the major capital projects given at Appendix 3 to the report. Members noted the spend to date of £25,736 million and were reminded that many capital programmes profiles were such that they completed in the final quarter and it was anticipated that the projected outturn at 31 March 2018 would be in line with the revised budget.

The Chairman thanked the Principal Accountant and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor L Maddison noted transport being over budget in terms of bus shelter repairs and increases in business rates for car parks and bus stations and asked if the repair costs were through general wear and tear, or incidents of vandalism. The Principal Accountant noted likely both, however, he could check as regards this and report back to Committee. Councillor L Maddison noted a number vandalised in her Electoral Division.

Councillor J Maitland asked if there was an underspend, did that budget lose this amount from subsequent budgets. The Principal Accountant noted not necessarily as some were one-off reductions, however, where they were savings being made in advance then it would equate to a reduction in budget.

Councillor P Howell thanked the Principal Accountant for the inclusion of year to date figures within the report. He referred to page 37 of the agenda pack and asked as regards supplies and services which noted a £1 million underspend at Quarter 3 and predicted a £500,000 overspend at the year end. The Principal Accountant noted that it would depend upon the spend profile, with not all dividing equally into twelfths across the year and added that in bringing together the forecast outturn, Officers from Finance worked with budget managers and would challenge in terms of budget spend. Councillor P Howell asked how, all of a sudden, there was an overspend. The Principal Accountant reiterated that depending upon the profile the year to date figure may give a false position. Councillor P Howell noted that agency and contracted was an area that should be manageable, however, again this showed an overspend and noted concern in terms of the quality of information from budget holders. It was agreed that the Principal Accountant would meet with Councillor P Howell to discuss.

Councillor P Jopling asked if budget holders were asked why in terms of overspends. The Principal Accountant noted they were, and in some cases there could be slippages in terms of invoices, and with more costs coming in at the year end. Mr T Batson from his experience in the past in dealing with public sector contracts it was sometime difficult to get an accurate picture until the year end.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **10      Quarter 3, 2017/18 Performance Management Report**

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager, Tom Gorman who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter 3, 2017/18 Performance Management Report (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillors noted that the key achievements in Quarter 3 included the employment rate having increased since the last quarter, with this having been the trend over the last few quarters. It was added that the rate was above the regional average, though below the national average. Members noted that full-time employment had now increased and was above the regional and national levels and were reminded of the County Durham Economic Partnership's (CDEP) measure in terms of reaching pre-recession levels in terms of employment, and accordingly this measure may need to be looked at in the near future.

It was added that the number of young people ages 18-24 claiming Job Seekers Allowance or Universal Credit had increased, was below the regional level, however, it was above the national average. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager noted the proportion of 16 to 17 year olds in apprenticeship in County Durham in September 2017 was lower than last year, though above the national average and in line with the national average. He added that there could be a hiatus at Quarter 3 as this is the period during which young people leave school and there could be a number of "not knowns".

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager explained that the level of Gross Valued Added (GVA) in County Durham was increasing at a rate greater than the rest of the country, however, it had started with a lower base and still lower than the regional and national figures.

Members were asked to note that Government had recently released a document that modelled a 15 year impact upon each region in the UK following Brexit. It was added that the model predicted the North East would fare worst of the regions, although it was difficult to judge at this stage. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager noted that the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee were looking at the issue of the impact of Brexit on Local Authorities until the date of exit from the European Union in March 2019.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager added that the Works and Pensions Select Committee had noted European Social Fund (ESF) would cease upon Brexit and noted that if it was not replaced there could be a great impact.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager and asked Members for their comments and questions on the performance report.

Councillor P Howell noted his thanks for inclusion of the number of apprentices, and asked as regards Appendix 3, Section 4, "Is it easy to get around the County?" and asked why the data was from 2015/16 and not more up-to-date.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager noted that the data was that provided back to the Council from Government, though it may be possible to use our own data as a proxy, though it would need to be prefaced that the data was not validated. Councillor P Howell noted he would not want Members to make decisions based upon old data.

Councillor E Adam noted that the report stated approximately 75% of employed residents in the County working full-time and noted this meant 25% of employed residents did not work full-time and argued there was still a lot of work yet to be done in this regard.

Councillor E Adam referred to PI CYPS 2, the percentage of 16 to 17 year olds who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and asked what impact there was in terms of the "not knowns". Councillor L Maddison noted it was an issue, with schools not finding out from the young people themselves. The Chairman noted the Local Authority had previously followed up through phone calls and destination reports. Councillor E Adam noted that Schools and Colleges were obliged to follow up and therefore this information should be captured. Councillor P Jopling asked if JobCentre Plus had the relevant information, the Chairman noted a previous piece of work undertaken by the Committee had noted this was not the case. Councillor L Maddison noted the work undertaken in the past by the former Connexions service and wondered if data from the One-Point Service may now reflect this.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **11 Refresh of the Work Programme**

The Chairman asked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to speak to Members in relation to the Council Plan 2016-2019 – Refresh of the Work Programme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that the report highlighted work that had been undertaken by the Committee within the past year and also looked forward to seek suggestions from Members to be included within the Committee's work programme for the forthcoming year. Members were reminded that the aims and objectives were aligned to those of the Council Plan and associated plans, as well as the Altogether Wealthier priority theme. It was explained that the work programme for 2018/19 would need to include further updates on a number of items considered in 2017/18, systematic reviews of recommendations in previous scrutiny review reports, focused scrutiny meetings, including two further workshops in relation to the County Durham Plan (CDP) and additional areas of overview activity.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded members that a further report would come back to Committee in June for Members' consideration.

The Chairman thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer and asked Members for their comments and questions.

Councillor P Jopling noted a big push economically on Durham City and that successes here may scale down to the smaller towns.

She asked if there was connection in terms of the large insurance companies that owned a lot of the vacant units, looking to try and have those vacant units occupied by niche retailers. Councillor P Jopling noted it may be necessary to sub-divide units, however, she noted it was important that the Council make contact and work with owners to try and look for solutions.

Councillor J Clare noted the report showed the immense volume of work undertaken by the Committee and asked if reviews could drop off the reports after 6 months. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that there are 3 progress updates on previous review recommendations then the review does not feature in future work programmes.

Mr T Batson noted Councillor P Jopling's point, however, he added that the public sector had mandatory obligations and the private sector had more scope for negotiation.

Councillor L Maddison noted the format in terms of 3 updates on review reports, however, asked what would happen in the case where there were outstanding issues. The Chairman noted that if there was a specific issue then that it could be raised with Officers, or an individual Councillor could pursue accordingly. Councillor L Maddison noted she felt that if there was an outstanding issue it should be Overview and Scrutiny to pursue, not individual Councillors. The Chairman noted in some cases issues that had been identified could be beyond the control or influence of the Local Authority and often outstanding issues would come back to Committee linked to other matters.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the information contained in Appendix 2.
- (ii) That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee refresh the Work Programme for 2018-2019 by discussing and considering those actions identified, under “Altogether Wealthier” priority theme of the Council Plan 2016 - 2019, Appendix 2 and reflected in paragraphs 9, 10 and 11 of the report.
- (iii) That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 June 2019, receive a further report detailing the Committee’s Work Programme for 2018-2019.

**12 Site Visits to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Sites in County Durham**

The Chairman asked the Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer to speak to Members in relation to the recent visits to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) sites in the County, 6 March 2018 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to the report setting out the main issues raised during the visits, highlighting that an issue that had been discussed was how to encourage those living at the sites to enrol on the Electoral Register. He added that of 6 sites, 3 had been canvassed by the usual method employed across the County, Drum Lane, Tower Road and Ash Green Way, Bishop Auckland.

It was noted this prompted 7, 9 and 6 registrations respectively. The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that for the remaining three sites an Elections Officer specifically visited, alongside an Officer from the GRT Team. He added that this returned 14, 15 and 21 responses, the latter approach proving to be more successful. It was noted that this method had been agreed as the approach going forward across all 6 sites for the 2018 canvass. Members noted there was still work to do to help demonstrate confidence and build on the positive relationship the GRT have.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted refurbishment of the sites, totalling approximately £9 million, possible via a Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) capital grant and a presentation had been circulated in terms of the huge difference this investment had made. Members were informed that all sites were at maximum capacity, with all plots occupied, and there were 35 people on the waiting list. It was emphasised that it was important to the GRT community for the Local Authority to be enabling the same level of access to services.

Councillor P Jopling noted new Government regulations in terms of those GRT that did not live at permanent sites and asked how this effected the Council and asked if there was a waiting list, was there a need to increase capacity or look to create more sites. , adjacent to the Council.

The Chairman noted that the question had been raised as regards expanding sites, with the site at Chester-le-Street being in private ownership, adjacent to the Council ran site, having some capacity. The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer noted there was management of the permanent and temporary GRT sites, noting seasonal events, for example Appleby Fair.

It was noted that the Council's GRT Liaison Staff managed the 6 permanent sites and also looked at temporary sites as well as any illegal sites, though there were clear distinctions.

**Resolved:**

That the notes of the site visit be noted.