

At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 12TH DECEMBER, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors Bonallie, E. Gibson, D. Richardson and A. Wright

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Tate

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Heron, Lauchlan, I. Richardson, Scott and Tye.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee held on 24th October, 2011

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 24th October, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee held on 7th November, 2011

2, RESOLVED that the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Committee held on 7th November, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Low Carbon Vehicles in the Delivery of Public Services Policy Review 2011/12: Progress Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform Members of progress on the Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review for 2011/12 into Low Carbon Vehicles – the Delivery of Public Services in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Helen Lancaster, Scrutiny Officer presented the report and advised that further information on the Nissan Test Track would be brought to the January meeting of the Committee and enquired if Members wished to provide any feedback from the recent site visits undertaken.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that she found the visit to the University of Sunderland's Industry Centre very interesting and appreciated the work being carried out.

Councillor D. Richardson commented that he believed the large amount of work going on in relation to the Nissan Test Track would provide a great boost to the region.

The Chairman commented that he found the visit to Gateshead College to be fantastic and was very impressed with their work.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Low Carbon Vehicles in the Delivery of Public Services Review 2011/12: Contribution from the City's MPs

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) informing Members of a written submission of evidence from two of the City's MPs which forms part of the wider evidence gathering for the Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review for 2011/12 into Low Carbon Vehicles – the Delivery of Public Services in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Lancaster presented the report and advised that a third written submission of Evidence from Julie Elliott MP had been received and was circulated to Members.

The Chairman commented that he was pleased to receive a response from all three MPs and advised that a meeting had been arranged with Sharon Hodgson MP but unfortunately this had to be cancelled.

Councillor A. Wright commented that he felt the three submissions from the MPs were very good and would contribute towards a successful report.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Performance Report Quarters 1 and 2 (April – September 2011)

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with a performance update for the period April to September 2011.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mike Lowe, Head of Performance Improvement presented the report and advised that of the 48 Indicators in the report, 21 had progressed, 10 had shown improvement and 9 had declined, but these were due to insignificant issues.

Councillor Tate wished to congratulate Officers on lowering rates of road accidents and raised the issue of Traffic/Street Lights taking longer than seven days to be repaired and stated that if no-one reported faulty lights, it could take up to 14 days before they were fixed.

Councillor Tate also enquired if the Authority had the full complement of Enforcement Officers in relation to dog fouling.

Mr. Clark advised that there were a number of vacancies with only 13 Enforcement Officers in post out of a possible 15 and they were looking at further changes as they moved towards more multi-functional roles. Mr. Clark commented that he would try and provide Councillor Tate with an update.

The Chairman acknowledged that the department was understaffed and that this could not be helped but we had to try and ensure a fair coverage of those staff in post so that no area received a lesser service than others.

In relation to street lights, Mr. Clark advised that there was a seven day turnaround on repairs, but if faults were not reported, this could take longer.

The Chairman commented that Aurora's performance was very good currently, but there was always room for improvement.

Councillor E. Gibson advised that there were other circumstances involved with some of the issues over faulty street lights such as damage to the electrical wiring and underground cabling caused by demolitions/ foundation work at Doxford Park for example and therefore felt Aurora was doing very well in coping with these issues.

Councillor E. Gibson also felt that recycling in the City was going really well with the instructions for the wheelie bins being very clear and useful. Councillor Gibson also commented that she was pleased to see a decrease in road accidents as a lot of work had been carried out and was showing good results.

The Chairman commented that he felt it was a good report but we were still not building enough houses, which was not sustainable for the City but acknowledged this was not within the Authority's remit and we must stress to the Cabinet on the need to lobby partners on the issue.

The Chairman also requested that Colin Clark, the new Head of Planning and Property be invited to attend future meetings of this Committee.

Mr. Lowe advised that Colin Clark had stated he would attend future meetings but unfortunately could not attend this meeting due to a prior engagement.

The Chairman raised the issue of recent strike action which affected the collection of brown bins and that these would not be collected until next year now.

Mr. Les Clark advised that unfortunately this was an inevitable consequence of the strike action and to catch up the following day would have come at a considerable cost, so the timing of the strike could not have been worse.

The Chairman commented that he recognised the issue but as this was a unique situation, it must be dealt with and was not impressed with how the Call Centre had dealt with the issue in their corporate response.

In relation to the report, the Chairman felt it was very good and showed that the Authority was delivering on performance.

5. RESOLVED that the Committee considered the findings of the report, including areas of good progress made and those areas that needed further improvement.

Work Programme 2011-12

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which was attached for members' information, the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2011-12 Council Year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman highlighted the busy programme of future meetings in the New Year and wished to stress the importance of Members attendance if possible.

Ms. Lancaster also wished to draw to Members attention that the January/February meetings would be held in venues within the community and not at the Civic Centre.

6. RESOLVED that Members noted the information contained in the Work Programme.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st December 2011 – 31st March 2012

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive Forward Plan for the period 1st December 2011 – 31st March 2012 which related to the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the Committee had considered the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st December 2011 – 31st March 2012.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance, wished them a Merry Christmas and closed the meeting.

(Signed) G. MILLER,
Chairman.