

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**OF THE PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2006**

Present: Councillor C Patching (Chair)  
Councillors P J Campbell, J Haggan,  
T Longstaff and D Milsom

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors B Joyce, Mrs S Mason, R Burnip and G Wharrier.

**2 CHAIR'S COMMENTS**

The Chair explained that Councillor W R Peardon was no longer a Member of the committee and thanked him for his contributions and active participation. He welcomed Councillor D Milsom who had replaced him.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**3 THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 31 October 2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

**4 MATTERS ARISING**

(i) **Review of Health Services North and South of the Tees – Darzi Review (Minute No 4 refers)**

The Director of Regeneration and Development explained that Councillor Todd, Councillor Mrs Huntington and himself had been interviewed by the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) at the University Hospital of North Tees on 14th November 2006. They had outlined the key issues affecting Easington and explained that there needed to be a sustainable pattern of general hospital provision. Over 60% of the public within the district used the University Hospital of Hartlepool and it was critical that there was a full account taken of health deprivation in the Easington District when determining future acute health service provision at Hartlepool. Full regard also needed to be taken of accessibility from Easington district into Teesside. On average, it would take an extra 30 minutes to travel to the University Hospital of North Tees and patients using public transport would need to change services. He added that they had been questioned on the benefits of community transport but had advised that he felt provision of community transport services to improve accessibility generally worked better in urban areas.

The IRP asked for their views on the safety of splitting child trauma from child medical services. He had explained to the panel that the issues around clinical judgements were not for the District Council to comment upon.

The Independent Reconfiguration Panel had to submit their report to the Secretary of State before 18 December and would be available on the website for public access.

A Member explained that he was a member on the County Durham Health Scrutiny Committee and a lot of people who lived in the north of Easington who usually attended Sunderland Royal Hospital were now accessing services at the University Hospital of Hartlepool because of the congestion at the Royal Hospital.

The Chair requested that a written briefing update paper be provided for Members.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (i) the information given, be noted;
- (ii) a written briefing paper be circulated to Members.

- 5 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 7 November 2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

**Item 3 - Regional Spatial Strategy For The North East – EIP Panel Report**

The Chair explained that this item linked to work the committee had carried out previously and noted the concerns outlined in the report.

**Item 4 - Haswell Community Centre And Community Centre Policy**

**Item 8 - Tender For External Consultants To Support The North Peterlee Neighbourhood Management Partnership Board Development Programme And Approval To Access "Start Up" Costs For The North Peterlee Neighbourhood Management Partnership (AOB)**

The Chair explained that partnership working was discussed in both of the abovementioned reports but they related to regeneration issues and were not within the terms of reference of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

- 6 **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

- 7 **EAST DURHAM LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP – SUB GROUP CHAIRS**

- (a) The Chair explained that Peter Richards from Groundwork East Durham was in attendance to provide information on the Environment Sub Group.

P Richards explained that he was the Executive Director of Groundwork East Durham and was the only voluntary sector Chair. He explained that the Environment Group was not a statutory sub group and only recently had formal targets from government. The Environment Group had set up two sub groups, the Accessibility Group and the Pride in Easington which had been previously called the Liveability Sub Group.

P Richards had been provided with questions that Members wished to ask prior to his attendance.

(i) **What was the role of the Sub Group within the LSP and which Members/Officers from the District Council supported it?**

P Richards explained that there had been an outstanding change in performance over the last three years. Previously they had been in the bottom quartile but this had now changed dramatically and was down to efforts of the District Council rather than the group. Councillor G Patterson, the Executive Member for Liveability sat on the Environment Group and Officer representation included the Liveability Officer and the Sustainability Officer who had both recently left the authority to take up new posts. Emma Coates from the Regeneration Team also attended regularly. The group also had very good community attendance. In the new year, a partnership event was to be held to encourage Officers and Members of the Community Empowerment Network to engage with the group more.

(ii) **Where had the Sub-Group been most and least effective so far?**

P Richards explained that a major strength was consultation with the community and examples of this included Minewater treatment, the Urban Rural Renaissance Initiative and the Local Development Framework. A number of service improvements for the community had taken place which included Dawdon Community Centre, Edenhill shop fronts, Eastlea Community Centre, Oak Road Neighbourhood Park.

P Richards explained that the least effective was authority representation and there was a problem in getting the right people to attend. Priorities for communities could be delivered but there needed to be different authorities working better together to take projects forward.

(iii) **Are the LSP Sub Groups equally as effective in terms of structure and outcomes?**

P Richards explained that the Sub Groups were probably not equally as effective as each other. Some groups had statutory responsibility so they were more effective than the voluntary in nature.

(iv) **How does the LSP ensure that full benefits of sharing data and information between partners is obtained?**

P Richards explained that the LSP was good at community consultation but not so good at maximising inter authority collaboration. The LSP was more about partnerships and if structures were brought in to codify the approach then this would change the nature of the LSP.

(v) **What steps could the LSP take to ensure wider involvement in its work?**

P Richards explained that more authority involvement was the key issue.

- (vi) **The LSP should be accountable to the community for its work. How is accountability achieved, measured and reported back to the community? Was the membership of the LSP and its Sub Groups reflective of the community?**

P Richards explained that he thought the LSP was good at being accountable to the community. There was service improvement involvement, feedback and review although this was unmeasured evaluation at a strategic level.

- (vii) **How effective was the LSP communicating its achievements/non-achievements and those of the Sub Group?**

P Richards explained that the LSP TV was used and filming was currently taking place using items from the Environment Group for the LSP TV. The Eddies awarded a person nominated who made a difference to the community. Last years winner Rhona Hardy was from Shotton.

- (viii) **What arrangements were in place within the Sub Group to report upon its activities and what were the reporting mechanisms from the sub group to the LSP?**

P Richards explained that there was a quarterly reporting mechanism although an annual reporting mechanism was better for the Environment Group. Feedback was also given to the full LSP and the Executive of the LSP.

- (ix) **How effective was the LSP and the Sub Groups at raising awareness of its activities to partner organisations and the community?**

P Richards explained that they were effective amongst themselves in the environment and community sectors. He added that it was difficult to engage people who were not interested in the environment.

The Chair thanked Mr Richards for his attendance.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

- (b) The Chair explained that Richard Prisk, the Director of Regeneration and Development was in attendance to provide information on the Economy Sub Group.

R Prisk explained that the key priorities were worklessness, supporting business growth, new starts and enterprise and providing modern business infrastructure.

R Prisk had provided a report in response to the questions that Members wished to ask prior to his attendance.

(i) **What was the role of the Sub Group within the LSP and which Members/Officers from the District Council supported it?**

R Prisk explained that the group was thematic for improving the economy of East Durham. The principle roles of the group included:-

- developing and promoting a dynamic East Durham economy;
- generating employment opportunities;
- stimulating investment to benefit the local population and the business community;
- promoting a partnership approach and supporting sustainability;
- developing opportunities for business starts to support business growth;
- developing a modern business infrastructure and promoting employability.

Partners included Acumen Development Trust, Community Empowerment Network, County Durham Jobcentre Plus, Easington Primary Care Trust, East Durham and Houghall Community College, Business Link County Durham, Connexions, East Durham Partnership and Durham County Council.

There were several officers who supported the Economy Group including Sarah Slaven, East Durham Business Service Manager, Stephen James and Heather Lang, Economic Development, and John Murphy, the LSP manager. Additional officers from Regeneration and Partnerships also attended as necessary.

(ii) **Where had the Sub Group been most effective so far?**

The Economy Group had been most effective through the development of its priorities/targets and the development of initiatives implemented to tackle these issues, such as employability and worklessness. As a result the progress against local targets including incapacity benefit claimants and new start businesses were above targets and enabling positive outcomes for the community of East Durham.

Effective collaborative working could be demonstrated through the development of the East Durham Employability Action Plan (June 2006) supported by partners. The progression of the Action Plan led to the formulation of an employment team based at Acumen Community Enterprise Development Trust. A sub group of the Economy Group, East Durham Employability Task Group was responsible for developing the Action Plan, monitoring the activity of the employment team to support clients into employment and improve engagement with employers to help fill vacancies and support business growth.

Additional achievements included in 2005/6, 103 new start businesses received grant supports (target 95), 90 young people commenced apprenticeships (target 80), 1264 people supported interim employment (ATfJ target 380), tailored support business support to help businesses to increase their turnover and create employment opportunities to increase the quantity and quality of new start businesses. Completion of Novus Business Centre which offered high quality office space, engaging with wider economic strategies such as the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI), promoting and developing entrepreneurial culture. Members of the Economy Sub Group had been and continued to be particularly active in the treasury support of national Round 1 programme.

R Prisk explained that the group had been least effective in maintaining an up to date evidence base related to the performance of the local economy and dynamics and the local labour market and through this to review, assess and measure the effect specific initiatives were having within East Durham. The Economy Group regularly received updates on individual project performances, targets achieved and financial resources committed. However, there was a need to review performance in a broader outcome and impact sense derived from all activities more effectively to manage risk factors and enable projects to deliver maximum benefits to the communities of East Durham. Data sharing was however now been developed through Employability Task Group.

Partnership engagement and maintenance of the participation of all key economic agencies that operated at the sub regional and regional level. This fact was tackled through maintaining contact with representatives of such agencies through over partnership working routes as appropriate.

Better processes for developing reserve projects: opportunities often arose to bid for additional funding to meet and help deliver the economy groups priorities. Co-ordinated approaches and reserve projects would enable a group to maximise all opportunities.

Engaging the business community: there was a need to improve linkages between the business forum/East Durham Development Agency and the Economy Group to ensure that the needs of the business community were met effectively. Plans were in progress to enable this to be addressed.

(iii) **Are the LSP Sub Groups equally as effective in terms of structure and outcomes?**

R Prisk explained that as the Chair of the Economy Group he was not able to answer this question as he had had no direct involvement in other sub groups. However, as a member of the LSP Executive into which all sub groups report, he felt that each group had developed operational practices to deliver outcomes that were suitable for the nature of the differing services that they were concerned with and the cultural approaches of the organisations involved.

(iv) **How does the LSP ensure that full benefits of sharing data and information between partners was obtained?**

R Prisk explained that all sub groups produced performance reports and presentations to the LSP. Each sub group had agreed targets and priorities which were shared with all partners to ensure common goals

were achieved and maximised. Regular updates were provided at sub group meetings to ensure partners were aware of all activities and progress. Flexible agendas at the sub groups facilitated partner engagement and information sharing.

(v) **What steps could the LSP take to ensure wider involvement in its work?**

R Prisk explained that for the Economy Group's work, a key stakeholder comprised local businesses as representing the labour demand side of the economy and local communities in terms of labour supply side issues related to skills and attainment. A variety of means to communicate and engage with differing groups or interest were used to ensure the shape and nature of services provided was aligned to meet business objectives and local communities aspirations. Maintenance of involvement was however dependent on maintaining a regular dialogue and delivering on commitments to build up trust and appreciation of the scope and remit of the LSP's activities.

To achieve the goal of greater involvement, a number of techniques were used and could be built upon including wider stakeholders awareness raising events, events to celebrate progress/achievements, communication strategies and mechanisms and a range of networking and personal contact approaches to build up a more informed picture of issues and expectations regarding an effective economic development service.

The LSP could also work to develop and cement links between sub groups to ensure collaborative working and common priorities that would help to ensure wider involvement. In addition, there was a need to further develop the LSP website to facilitate information sharing and was also a good mechanism to engage with the public. Connections should be made with other agencies and partner websites to illustrate connectivity.

(vi) **The LSP should be accountable to the community for its work. How was accountability achieved, measured and reported back to the community? Was the membership of the LSP and its sub groups reflective of the community?**

R Prisk explained that all LSP economic priorities were aligned with the Community Strategy and therefore thought to broadly reflect community needs.

The Community Empowerment Network attended sub group meetings, the Executive and the Strategic Funding Group and represented the community perspective. At least three CEN members were invited to each of the sub groups and all cascaded information back to the community. However, it was recognised that this good level of representation presently achieved did not represent all aspects of the community. It was important to provide communication and all involvement routes were used. This was particularly important for the Economy Group given a critical community to engage with is the business community and also regional and sub regional agencies with responsibility for specific aspects of the economic policy agenda, such as, One NorthEast, County Durham Learning and Skills Council and Business Link County Durham.

It should also be noted that in a number of aspects the LSP was charged to assist to deliver national policy goals such as for example reducing

levels of worklessness. In these instances, there was a need to address concerns that might not be immediately recognised as local community priorities but represent a wider responsibility of the LSP.

(vii) **How effective was the LSP at communicating its achievements/non-achievements and those of the sub group?**

R Prisk explained that the LSP was fairly effective at communicating achievements and non-achievements and used a variety of mechanisms including:

- East Durham Business Service newsletter;
- LSP TV;
- press releases;
- promotional and publicity campaigns;
- websites (however this required development to ensure it was effective);
- newsletters and newspapers including Infopoint.

There was a need for continuing effective communications mechanisms. Better use could be made of the LSP Communications Group to ensure there was a co-ordinated and a partnership approach towards communication. Additionally some reports should be distributed to all sub groups to ensure full awareness of key issues.

(viii) **What arrangements were in place within the Sub Group to report upon its activities and what were the reporting mechanisms within the Sub Group to the LSP?**

R Prisk explained that there was a variety of arrangements within the sub group to report upon activities including:-

- Employability Task Group reports to the Economy Group;
- quarterly performance reports in relation to spend targets and progress of activities;
- wider economy strategies and initiatives were updated within meetings both verbally and through written reports;
- presentations on key issues.
- all group members were encouraged to participate and update on activities.

Reporting mechanism to the LSP included the Chairs reports to the LSP Executive, specific activity presentations, quarterly performance management report and annual review reports particularly around key targets and worklessness.

(ix) **How effective was the LSP and the Sub Groups at raising awareness of its activities to partner organisations and the community?**

R Prisk explained that as highlighted previously, raising awareness was fairly effective and was done through a variety of mechanisms. However, there was a need to develop the role of the Communications Group to ensure these methods were effective and being maximised.

R Prisk explained that there was a partnership approach to meet priorities with a strategic focus on key issues facing East Durham and processes were in place to promote this approach. Overall, the group needed to increase economic prosperity of East Durham and was trying to promote an enterprise culture. A co-ordinated approach needed to be facilitated to tackle the labour supply, supporting the business base and maximising assets.

The Chair referred to employability and explained that a previous presentation had been given to the committee from the Chair of the Learning and Skills Sub Group and queried at what point did education and employment issues connect. R Prisk explained that this was often discussed at the LSP Executive. The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund made sure things were joined up as best they could. There was a commitment to Local Area Agreements which included an issue of driving up attainment and skills levels. 50% of people had no formal qualifications in the district and it was a large gap to close. The Learning and Skills Group was being reformed to the Childrens Services Group to marry with the recent changes at Durham County Council. Post 16 Education would be transferring to the Economy Group. Joint meetings were held from time to time with both groups.

A Member referred to a dip in educational attainment at Key Stage 3, and suggested that some people be given the opportunity to find work at the age of 14 rather than 16.

R Prisk explained that there was a reduction in performance at Key Stage 3 and 4, particularly in boys. They needed to be motivated and continue in a positive learning progression. More vocational GCSEs and partnerships with colleges were required. If East Durham's economy was to grow and remain competitive it would need to have available a more skilled workforce.

S Slaven explained that the modern apprenticeship scheme was very successful at engaging with 16 year olds. Government were bringing in younger apprenticeships but she did not have full details as yet.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their attendance.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**8 ANY ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

In accordance with the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, Section 100B(4)(b) the Chair, following consultation with the Proper Officer, agreed that following item of business, not shown on the Agenda, be considered as a matter of urgency.

**9 SUB GROUP CHAIRS (AOB)**

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that this was the conclusion of the scrutiny of the Sub-Group Chairs. There had been a number of references to data sharing

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and information sharing being achieved at the Executive level. He suggested that members may wish to invite the Leader of the Council as Chair of the LSP Executive together with the LSP support Officers to a future meeting to explain how data sharing functioned at that level.

Reference was also made to the recent White Paper which referred to Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships. The Assistant Chief Executive had been working on Local Area Agreements and also managed the unit that included the Local Strategic Partnership and the Scrutiny Support Manager suggested that she be invited into a future meeting to discuss the relationship between the LSP and the Local Area Agreements and how they were performance managed.

The Involvement of the Community Empowerment Network had also been a consistent feature in the presentations received to date especially when discussing how the Community was involved in policy development and target setting. Members considered it worthwhile to invite some members of the CEN to a future meeting to get their views on how effective they feel the sub groups and the LSP are.

**RESOLVED** that the Chair of the LSP, the Assistant Chief Executive and representatives from the Community Empowerment Network be invited to a future meeting.

JC/MA/com part/061102  
23 November 2006