

Minutes

Economic Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 23rd March, 2006, Town Hall

Present: Councillor Hopgood (in the Chair), Cowper, Graham, McDonnell, Pape, Shaw, Simmons, and Thomson

Also Present: Councillors Bell, Carr, Howarth, Kellett, Kinghorn, Marsden, Robinson and Young. Mr. K. James (Member of the public)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Rochford and Stoddart

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28th February, 2006 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. SRB6 – Further Discussion

The Chair welcomed the invited guests (Councillor Bell – Chair of ARB Board, Mr. Steven Bowyer, SRB Programme Manager Durham County Council, Mr. John Tindale, Economic and Community Development Manager, City of Durham Council).

Mr. Bowyer, gave an outline of the County Council's SRB programme, describing;

- SRB Structure
- Financial Update For Durham County Council
- Illustration Of Programme Outputs
- Programme Management
- Challenges
- Closure 2007

Mr. Bowyer explained to Panel Members that the funding for SRB projects was obtained from Central Government via One North East, via County Council who dealt with County wide projects and allocated funding for District projects via District Councils.

Countywide projects cut across the whole County, more information is available from the County Council on specific projects.

A recent audit report carried out by Price Waterhouse was returned with no comments regarding the financial procedures.

Expenditure to date is 64% achieving a full spend of available funds, however, if an overspend occurs the overspend would be deducted from the next financial year's allocation of funds.

The amount of funding available for SRB programmes is declining year on year,

2004/05 £7million was allocated; 2005/06 £4.5 million was allocated and 2006/07 the figure is just under £2million. Match funding has been achieved receiving £4 million from the private sector and £6 million from the public sector.

There are vast outputs, 50 across the programme.

- 38% of outputs above target
- 39% of outputs on target
- 23% of outputs below target.

The number of projects operating is reducing, thematic projects operating 2005/06 was 7 and 2006/07 the number is 6.

An evaluation team was set up at the start of SRB, that focus on specific number of projects looking at delivery of the programmes and what lessons are to be learned. The evaluations are measured against a base line of long tem effectiveness.

Members asked if the monitoring arrangements were carried out with the same stringency at local level. This was confirmed, regular health checks are carried out at local level. District Authorities are subject to audit procedures guidelines are available from the County Council.

4. Items for Next Meeting

- Invite the following to the next scheduled meeting:
 - Mr John Tindale (Economic & Community Development Manager Durham City Council)
 - Councillor Wynn (Durham City Arts)
 - Councillor Bell (Chair of SRB)
 - Councillor Jean Chaplow (Heart of the Villages Representative)
 - Professor Robinson (St Chad's College, Durham University)
 - Mr. K. James (Representative of 12 Villages)
- Full list of all projects
- Copy of slides and booklet for all panel members

Meeting terminated at 6.20 pm