

Minutes

Economic Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday, 25th April, 2006, Town Hall

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

Also Present: Councillors Bell, Carr, Colledge, Freeman, Hepplewhite, Howarth, Kellett, Marsden, Smith, Turnbull, Wynn and Young. Mr M Thompson and Mr J Tindale (City of Durham), Professor Robinson (University of Durham), County Councillor Mrs Jean Chaplow (Heart of the Villages) Mr. K. James and Mrs E Cummings (Representatives from 12 Villages)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Simpson and Thomson

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March, 2006 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. SRB6 – Further Discussion

The Chair reminded Members that the purpose of the scrutiny was to evaluate the procedures; identify good practice and benchmarking for future funding. The chair introduced Professor Robinson from University of Durham who is currently undertaking an evaluation of the entire SRB programme.

Professor Robinson advised the panel that over the course of several years 40 programmes had been evaluated. Some of the programmes were complicated and diverse, very often programmes were very good on the ground, but perhaps should not have been funded out of main stream SRB. Delivery of programmes differs from district to district and from district level to County level, one of the tensions is that districts find it difficult to understand how County schemes benefit district and vice versa. Overall much good has come out of the programmes. Partnership arrangements are being looked at in the evaluation but each district has operated differently.

Members commented on the excellent work of the community development officers, particular praise was given to the work which had been undertaken in Ushaw Moor. Councillor Hepplewhite had commented that the village was unrecognisable from what it once was.

Professor Robinson informed the panel that the community development at the city of Durham was good. The outputs are numerous many of the outputs are relevant or revealing with spurious number crunching. It is difficult to pinpoint changes that have resulted due to SRB. Qualitative measures can be taken by looking at the projects, taking to the individuals involved and how they have been affected by the project. Local experiences are picked up by the evaluation.

The Chair pointed out the importance of publicity of making the public aware of what is going on, of communicating with community groups to inform of the pitfalls that have been experienced by other villages.

Members were informed that as a programme develops then the needs of the project change therefore there needs to be changes in the way things are done.

Mr. James (12 Villages) informed Members of a situation that had developed between the 12 villages and City of Durham, that SRB had provided for staff including a co-ordinator for the 12 villages and that the member of staff in had now been employed by the City of Durham Council in the recent restructure.

The Head of Community Services informed Members that the Authority still supports the 12 villages and this support would continue but that the post was developed to work across the whole district.

The panel were informed that the position was permanent post. Some panel members indicated that this was a good decision by the Authority to introduced the post into the establishment.

4. Items for Next Meeting

- Draft report on SRB 6
- Invite Mr James (12 Villages) to attend next meeting
- Copies of minutes and final report to be sent to all invited guests.

The Meeting terminated at 6.30 pm