

## 1<sup>st</sup> Draft Report of Economic Scrutiny Panel

### SRB 6

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Economic Scrutiny Panel was tasked with scrutinising SRB 6 (Single Regeneration Budget). The Council has been a successful SRB partner for the past three years, competing for funds with other local authorities within the district.
- 1.2 An audit of social and economic needs in the rural villages was carried out in 1998 for City of Durham. 12 communities were identified where regeneration activity should be targeted. The 12 Villages are :- Bearpark; Brandon; Ushaw Moor; New Brancepeth; Esh Winning; West Rainton; Sherburn Hill; Ludworth; Cassop; Bowburn; Quarrington Hill and Kelloe.
- 1.3 The Durham Coalfield was one of the biggest in the UK; however by 2000 all of the Durham mines have been closed, with a loss of over 100,000 jobs.

#### 2 Aims and Objectives

2.1 It was the objective of the Panel to discover the following:-

- What lessons have been learned
- How are spending levels controlled
- How are relationships with stakeholders developed
- How are grants allocated
- What monitoring provisions are in place

#### 3. Findings

- 3.1 The Panel discovered that although the general feedback from SRB projects was good Members who did not represent an SRB area were not familiar with the activities carried out under the umbrella of SRB.
- 3.2 The City of Durham's Community and Economic Development Manager provided information for members on recent programmes and gave background information on what had been achieved in previous years.
- 3.3 The SRB Programme Manager from the County Council gave members an insight into the structure behind the programmes, monitoring techniques and evaluation processes involved. The Programme Manager explained the direction of funding from government level down to project level and that the procedures used at County level are still in place at district level.
- 3.4 Professor Robinson of University Of Durham is currently working on an evaluation on SRB and was invited to attend a panel meeting. Professor Robinson informed Members that over the course of several years 40 programmes had been evaluated. Some of the programmes were complicated and diverse, very often programmes were good on the ground. Professor Robinson commented that Community Development was good.
- 3.5 That targets had been met and exceeded in most of the programmes supported by City of Durham.

- 3.6 Members had been informed that projects need to evolve as they develop therefore changes in procedures may be required.
- 3.7 The Panel indicated that the success of SRB should receive more publicity. To enable future applicants with awareness of pitfalls and successes of the project.
- 3.8 The 12 Villages representative informed the panel of a situation that had developed between the 12 Villages and the City of Durham. Following a restructure of the establishment of the City of Durham the post of co-ordinator was absorbed into the establishment.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 That the success of SRB be publicised both internally and externally throughout the organisation.
- 4.2 That future application procedures are clearly monitored and guidance is issued to applicants.
- 4.3 That there is uniform approval across district.
- 4.4 That Members were content with the governance arrangements between Central Government, One North East, County Council and City of Durham Council.
- 4.5 That awareness was raised about the subjective nature of projects and the difficulty in quantifying success.
- 4.6 That future funding is publicised at an early stage.
- 4.7 That outcomes are to be reviewed following the evaluation carried out by University of Durham