

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **13 December 2005**
Report of: **Executive Member for Regeneration**
Subject: **Partnership Scrutiny Report for Regeneration and Partnerships**
Ward: **All**

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide information to the Partnership Scrutiny Community on partnership arrangements within the regeneration portfolio.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 Consultation has taken place with the Chief Executive, staff of the Regeneration and Partnerships Unit, staff of the Community Regeneration unit and staff within East Durham Business Service.

2.2 The report has also been to the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for agreement.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Regeneration function within the Council relies heavily on working with others, through well-established partnerships, to deliver a comprehensive service.

3.2 The future policy emphasis for Local Government relies increasingly on partnerships to facilitate service delivery as well as promoting partnership arrangements for actual service delivery. The principal mechanism at the District level to undertake these arrangements is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). East Durham LSP has developed considerably since its establishment and now has a number of constituent bodies and groups as well as a responsibility to oversee a number of significant external funding regimes. The requirement for Local Authorities to facilitate the continuous development of East Durham LSP's has been reflected in the changes to the Council's organisational structure to fully embed the partnership principles the modernisation agenda promotes throughout the Authority.

3.3 The Corporate Development Unit undertake a lead role in relation to LSP development and its performance management, whilst the Regeneration and Partnerships Unit will focus on the strategic use of the LSPs resources and manage the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund alongside other external resources such as Single Regeneration Budget, European Funds, Liveability and Lottery Funds. This places partnership working at the heart of the Authority and focuses on the work of Funding and Programmes, Neighbourhood Renewal and Policy.

3.4 Existing relationships at a sub regional level with the County Durham Strategic Partnership are currently subject to a review process. The current focus upon governance arrangements will have future implications upon the emerging policy agenda of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and how the use of the Safer Stronger Communities Fund will be determined.

3.5 Key partnerships can generally be categorised spilt into three functions; policy, facilitation and delivery. This paper will outline the key partnership developments that the Council is involved with in relation to policy and facilitation. The partnerships that relate to delivery are many and varied and are often time limited and are therefore disregarded for the purpose of this report.

4.0 Summary of Partnership Arrangements

- 4.1 Key partners dealing with Strategic Policy Issues include the Local Government Association (LGA), the Coalfield Communities Campaign (CCC) and the Alliance for Regional Aid (ARA). Sub Groups of the LGA are also of interest to the operation of regeneration within the District, including the Commissions for Rural / Urban Communities.

The CCC is perhaps the strongest national lobbying organisation that is, of course, of prime relevance to the District. The Alliance for Regional Aid are also becoming stronger in this regard and work jointly with the CCC on many issues including a successor to Enterprise Zones, future State Aid arrangements and the arrangements for European Structural Funds beyond the current programme life.

The CCC is currently focusing upon the following policy agendas; The Northern Way 'What is in it for the ex Coalfields', including labour market supply / demand incentives. Problems of low educational attainment and poor health in coalfield areas are new lobbying areas for CCC and they are looking to form new partnerships to address these issues.

Lastly the CCC is to embark upon a process of revisiting their aims and objectives and assess their future priorities and targets within the coming months.

In addition CCC is also concentrating on the following issues in conjunction with its strategic partners:

Progressing the Coalfield Programme ex colliery sites (Vane Tempest, Seaham Colliery, Dawdon & Foxcover EZs and Thomas Bros).

Low-demand housing has been pushed higher up the agenda as English Partnerships (EP) now has strategic responsibility for Coalfield Housing. The CCC have continued to lobby for a dedicated programme to tackle the problems of low demand/abandonment, similar to the Coalfield Sites Programme and a sub regional partnership has been established within County Durham to progress this locally with EP.

Closer partnership arrangements are developing with English Partnerships building upon the relationship established during the implementation of the Coalfield Programme. This particularly relates to the research work involved in progressing the County Durham Housing Market Work, the progression of the Brownfield Land Pilot Initiative where the Council has agreed to invest £350,000 allocation within its strategic use of reserves work and the continuing commitment to the Peterlee Master planning process.

In addition closer working with the Coalfield Regeneration Trust in relation to exploring worklessness within the District and the continued consideration of investing within a special coalfield area within the District.

- 4.2 There are many partnerships working within the Region, sub region and the District established to deliver against the Regeneration and Economic Development priorities of East Durham, the most relevant include: -

□ Regional Partnerships

The changing responsibilities of partners at the Regional level have begun to stimulate new ways of working within the North East over the past 12 months. Aligning local priorities and actions with those identified within those forthcoming in the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy is being considered and developed. The Northern Way agenda and the promotion of a City Region approach to Regional Policy is stimulating considerable debate among stakeholders as a new pan – regional framework emerges. The Council's involvement

within the City Regions officer group and Chief Executives Group is vital during this process to ensure that the momentum established within the regeneration process is maintained.

□ **County Durham Strategic Partnership**

This partnership provides the facilitation of partners working towards the delivery of the County Durham Vision; it has agreed a range of challenges to promote regeneration at a sub regional level. It has also provided a partnership mechanism to bring forward and agree the second Local Public Service agreement for County Durham that is currently being negotiated with regional and central Government. This is now to be aligned within the new Local Area Agreement policy agenda whereby County Durham has been identified and agreed as being a second wave pilot area. Currently governance issues for this process are being established and agreed to determine the way in which the review of sub regional working will progress.

The County Council is the accountable body for Single Programme Funding that is delegated from One North East to implement the County's element of the Regional Economic Strategy. The County Durham Economic Partnership is the mechanism whereby Single Programme Funding is agreed to bring forward actions to address the economic priorities of County Durham. At present this partnership is bringing forward the priorities for the Economy 'block' of the Stronger Safer Communities Fund for inclusion within the Local Area Agreement as well as agree a 5 year capital investment programme for the County.

Both partnerships work closely together at the sub regional level and have cross representation. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration along with the Director of Regeneration and Development are members upon the Executive Group of the Partnership. This group deals with sub regional issues relating to priorities such as sites and premises, Tourism, Business Support arrangements and the Major Centres Programme. Supporting this work within a sub regional context cross Authority working is also emerging in relation to progressing the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI).

This opportunity is open to Authorities in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and to this end joint-working arrangements are being established between Easington, Sedgefield, Wear Valley and Derwentside. However an inclusive approach to the establishment of priorities is being undertaken whereby other authorities within the County are being involved within the deliberations.

□ **East Durham Local Strategic Partnership**

The LSP was established in May 2001 and has been chaired, since that time, by the Leader of the Council. The LSP has been accredited by Government Office North East and has received a further two years of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (2004-2006) to implement the Community Strategy. Implementation Groups operate in the fields of environment, economy, crime, health, housing and learning and skills. All groups have chairs that are specialists from these sectors and membership includes all relevant partners and the Community Network. These groups are still working to the thematic areas agreed in 2004: -

Restoring reassurance
Tackling Social Exclusion and Health Inequalities
Sustainable Communities
Investing in Young People
Improving Employment and Enterprise

For 2006-08 the LSP has been allocated £12.8M of NRF, and £1.6M of Safer Stronger Communities Fund. There is an agreed path for receiving NRF that is timetabled to conclude in April 2006 ensuring spends from day one.

The Community Empowerment Network has seen a reduction in its indicative allocation but further funding from SSCF to meet mandatory outcomes under the Local Area Agreement should shore this up. The LSP enjoys a good working relationship with the Community Empowerment Network and this should ensure that the CEN will pass the new 'fitness for purpose' test. Such is the level of trust the CEN are to play a major role in deciding priorities for service improvements in the voluntary and community sectors.

The Local Area Agreement is to be piloted in Durham from April 2006. This has meant a review of the County Durham Strategic Partnership and its linkages with District LSPs that mean there will be an era of uncertainty as to delivery, PMF and governance arrangements under the LAA.

The PMF and annual review meeting with Government Office highlighted certain areas of weakness i.e worklessness, decent homes standard, equality & diversity and Key Stage 4 (education). It did identify areas of strength including the Partnership itself, reduction of crime and initiatives within the Health domain that are attracting national interest. Overall, East Durham LSP is identified in the North East as a 'can do' partnership.

Many of the key partnerships that associated either directly or indirectly with the work of East Durham LSP fall within the remit of the regeneration portfolio and are outlined in the following sections.

□ **Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder**

The Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder for Easington Colliery and Horden has been operating for over three years with much progress to date. Over the next 5 years it is planned that Easington Colliery and Horden (3 wards in total) will continue to take part in an experimental approach to regeneration. A Government-approved partnership was formed and has been designated as 1 of only 20 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders nationwide. As the programme is generally perceived to be working well nationally, compared to New Deal for Community's and Local Strategic Partnerships, a further 15 Round 2 NMP's were approved this last year.

A board of local residents and councillors in conjunction governs the work of the Pathfinder with several professional service providers, (e.g. Health, Housing and the Environment, Employment, Young Peoples' Services, Policing and Education).

The aim is to bring 'joined-up' services to the area by focusing on better co-ordination and value for money. Unlike traditional regeneration initiatives the Pathfinder's funds are aimed at service improvement, enhancement and gap filling. This approach to helping the community to help itself is known as 'bending the spend.'

The Easington Colliery and Horden Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (NMP), has also progressed in its development and is well established in a partnership base at Horden. The NMP continues to perform above the expectations of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), Government Office for the North East (GoNE) and the Districts audit sections. This was reflected in very positive feedback from Government Office North East at the mid year review, particularly in relation to the creation of their performance management framework. On the 1st February 2005 GoNE confirmed that the Pathfinders performance had increased by 27% within 12 months in relation to their scoring system. Such an increase is well in excess of the 10% government target and the partnership has now achieved 'Good' status. Staff resources have also been enhanced and the posts of senior programme administration officer, operations manager and community engagement officer have all been identified being required and appointments have progressed well.

□ **Community Regeneration Partnerships**

The priority upon community engagement that the Authority has now established needs to be considered alongside the existing democratic processes and the direction of wider regeneration priorities. Closer working relationships that have developed between the District Council, the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) and the Community Empowerment Network has led to establishing greater joint working. This has manifested itself in the establishment and support of 2 support forums for the voluntary and community sector as well as progressing a review of the community development support structures in the District to support the sector. This process was commissioned to the Community Network to progress as a review by the LSP executive and has been facilitated by Durham University to date.

The roles and functions of the existing partnership structures locally is matter that is emerging as confusing and burdensome. There is a growing consensus that a clearer and more focused approach is required given the multitude of initiatives and the level of resources available to support current partnership structures. The community regeneration partnerships as well as many other local partnerships and initiatives are included in this review.

The community regeneration partnerships are at varying stages of development and differ in their structure, membership and effectiveness.

Although the advent of the CVS is promising, support mechanisms to the community sector across the District remain weak. The current lack of clarity relating to the future funding of the sector is creating a barrier to the sustainable development of the community sector and inhibiting its progress.

□ **The Strategic Funding Group**

As the development of the LSP has come forward its ability to attract wider external funding has increased dramatically since the inception of the LSP. As a result the European Objective 2 and SRB partnerships merged to establish the beginnings of a strategic funding group to serve the LSP. The purpose of this process is to establish a vehicle that can consider how best to use external funding to address the priorities and actions that are forthcoming from the LSP.

The group continues to have an incremental development process, which is determined by the funding programmes it is expected to manage. It currently has approval powers for EU structural funds for Objective 2 Priority 4, SRB and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Additionally, the group considers the best use of resources from wider bodies and partnerships in order to avoid duplication and generate maximum impact and best value from a wide range of other sources. These include: - Lottery Funding, Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, Sure Start, Urban II, Single Programme, wider European structural funds, Liveability, Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Northern Rock and charities. The degree of influence that this group has on the previously stated funds varies although it can be said that the group is growing in regional and sub regional recognition that has resulted in the Audit Commission recommending the Authority as a model of good practise through the CPA process.

□ **The Liveability Group**

With the development of the liveability pilot a small time limited group was established with membership drawn from the Community Safety, Housing and Environment implementation groups of the LSP. This group has overseen the delivery of a range of Service improvements and partner projects that have worked towards enhancing the quality of life in the district. The programmes largest element which sets out to improve derelict land and buildings has developed a close working relationship with English Partnerships National Brownfield Land Pilot which is expected to offer support and advice for future schemes.

□ **East Durham Business Service (EDBS)**

The Council and EDDA launched a new partnership in 2003/04 that brings together the Economic Development and Lifelong Learning functions of the District Council with the Business Support function of EDDA. East Durham Business Service was therefore charged with delivering a comprehensive service being clearly focussed on business support and development in the District.

The Business Service aims to 'make East Durham great for business' by:

- developing an entrepreneurial culture in East Durham
- fostering business growth and business survival
- generating quality and sustainable employment for local people
- promoting lifelong learning, health and skills development amongst the existing and future workforce
- developing the physical infrastructure to meet business and tourism needs
- attracting investment into East Durham

Since its inception, EDBS has established itself on the South West Industrial Estate, Peterlee, providing a one – stop-shop to businesses within the District. The Service is a key player within the Business Support Network that provides information, diagnostics and brokerage solutions under the Business Link brand. EDBS continues to be heavily involved, with Easington Action Team for Jobs and Easington Primary Care Trust, in driving forward the Aim High Routeback project that aims to get people off Incapacity Benefit and back into work. The Business service is also leading the East Durham Business Centre project that will provide over 8,000 sq ft of new, high quality office accommodation to assist new business starts and existing businesses in the District. Start on site is due to commence at the end of November 2005.

□ **East Durham Business Forum (EDBF)**

East Durham Business Forum was launched in April 2003 and links all businesses in the District through networking and best practice exchange. The Forum is run by a Steering Group chaired by John McGowan, Managing Director of Impressions and is facilitated by EDBS.

East Durham Business Forum (EDBF) represents all businesses located in East Durham giving them a voice within the local community on the issues that are important to them.

The Forum aims to give businesses a say in how the economic development of East Durham is undertaken, tackle the issues that profoundly affect business and the local community, provide a support network for businesses within East Durham and to stimulate the local economy.

Events are organised throughout the year giving businesses the opportunity to get together, have a bigger voice, and put their words into action. These events are topical and in the past year have covered issues such as Workplace Health, Funding and Employment Law. News of the Forum is promoted via its own website and the edbs publication, 'b' which is sent to all businesses in the district.

□ **Seaham and Peterlee Regeneration Partnerships**

Seaham

Seaham Regeneration Partnership continues to work on delivering the remaining flagship projects of the Seaham Regeneration Strategy (Drivers Jonas Master Plan)

prepared in 1994. A good governance arrangement has ensured that the information flow between officers and the Seaham Member Panel is timely and concise. This has enabled the smooth progression of projects through the decision making process.

Modus Properties have undertaken a public consultation event with the Seaham Partnership to inform the final designs of the Town Centre scheme. Planning approval has since been given and the commencement of work on site is expected to start early in 2006.

The St Johns Square area of the Town is now in a position to begin progressing the recommendations of a prepared Master Plan. Urban Designers have prepared a design code for the development and offered public realm improvement options. A Partnership of key partners (District Council, Seaham Town Council, Primary Care Trust and Durham County Council) has been formed and is now coordinating the progression of the various elements of the Master Plan. It is expected work could commence towards the later part of 2006/07.

The North Dock area of the Harbour has also been subject to a Master Planning exercise. A Partnership comprising the District Council, Seaham Harbour Dock Company, Heritage Coast, Seaham Town Council, Durham County Council, Friends of North Dock Seaham and potential funding partners has been established. This has overseen public accommodation works and the re-opening of North Dock to public for the first time since 1997. The Partnership has also coordinated a consultation event to advise on how further works could enhance public participation and usage within the area. Views from the consultation have been assessed and priorities determined for subsequent works phases. Discussions with funding bodies are now at an advanced stage. If discussions are positive the next stage of works could commence around Easter 2006.

Work has also recently been concluded on the reclamation of the former Seaham Colliery. This work was overseen by a partnership comprising the District Council, English Partnerships and One North East. A consultation was then undertaken to determine an appropriate end use for the site. This exercise determined that the site should be developed for housing. Approximately 400 units will be constructed.

A development brief has recently been prepared and the site will soon be offered to the market. The partnership will determine a preferred developer and oversee the sites development.

It is likely house building works will start on site early 2007.

A partnership has been formed between key agencies and user groups to guide the development of a new community sports and social facility at New Drive in Seaham. The proposal is looking to demolish and replace the existing Vane Tempest Welfare Centre and incorporate local football and rugby clubs in with the new development and improve the pitch provision on the adjacent fields. At present a planning application has been submitted for the development and the partnership is awaiting confirmation of approval before submitting funding applications to finance the development.

The Seaham Partnership also proposes to commission a successor to the Drivers Jonas Study to provide a framework to guide future regeneration activity. This is now likely to commence towards the end of this financial year and is to be linked to the review of the planning policy framework.

Peterlee

English Partnerships (EP) now has a remit for regeneration of new towns. EP in conjunction with the District of Easington, Peterlee Town Council and Durham County Council has therefore formed a partnership to oversee the renaissance of Peterlee.

A Peterlee Regeneration Framework report was commissioned in 2005. This has identified the key issues facing Peterlee. Two further reports are to be commissioned to identify options for taking forward the renaissance work. They will be a Town Centre Master Plan and a Residential Master Plan. Consultants will be appointed in 2006 to take forward this work.

To complement this activity a Regeneration Partnership of elected members has been formed comprising all public authorities with a stake in Peterlee. It is likely this Partnership will meet formally for the first time in the New Year.

The Partnership will guide any future regeneration activity proposed for Peterlee and it is expected to operate within the same model as the Seaham Regeneration Partnership due to its documented success.

5.0 Policy, Legal, Financial and Risk Implications

Policy Implications

There are no policy implications.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications

Risk Implications

A risk assessment has been completed although there are no risk implications to the report as it is required for information only.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 That Executive members note the contents of the report, and the positive progress made by the aforementioned partnerships.

Background Papers/Documents referred to

1. Service Delivery Scrutiny Reports
2. Resources Scrutiny Working Party Reports
3. Audit Commission PMF Validation Review Report – Easington LSP
4. Risk assessment matrix.