

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING**  
**OF THE PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2005**

Present: Councillor C Patching (Chair)  
Councillors R Burnip, P J Campbell,  
J Haggan, T Longstaff and W R Peardon

Also Present: Councillor D Myers – Executive Member for  
E-Government and Scrutiny Liaison  
Councillor R Crute – Executive Member for  
Regeneration

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs S Mason and B Joyce.

**2 THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 5 October 2005, a copy of which had circulated to each Member, were confirmed subject to the following alterations:-

page 1, paragraph 2, line 3, insert 'but' between 'government' and 'there';

page 2, paragraph 1, line 2, replace 'this' with 'which';

page 2, paragraph 1, line 9, insert 'difficulties of' between 'with' and 'mobility';

page 2, paragraph 3, line 1, replace 'Local Transport Plan 2' with 'Local Transport Plan 1 Final Report';

page 2, paragraph 4, line 2, insert 'opportunity' between 'alternative' and 'to'.

**3 THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING** held on 28 October 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

**4 THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 1 November 2005, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the information contained within the Minutes, be noted.

**5 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

**6 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 (4b) the Chair, following consultation with the Proper Officer agreed that the following item of business, not shown on the agenda, be considered as a matter of urgency.

**7 PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTION – DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

The Chair welcomed Mr Steve Lockwood, Rural Transport Team Leader from the Public Transport Section at Durham County Council who had been invited to the meeting to ascertain how the County Council would be inputting into the necessary transport solutions needed as part of the proposed changes to hospital services under the Darzi review. Also to obtain any information that had been received in attending the Darzi Transport Review meetings.

Mr Lockwood explained that he represented Durham County Council on the Transport Working Group which had been established to discuss the implications of the Darzi review on transport. He added that he managed the Rural Transport Partnership of which there were three in Durham County. He explained that the Darzi review meetings were looking at the problems around transport arising out of the Darzi report. The inaugural meeting was held on 29 July 2005 and there had been two subsequent meetings. The initial meeting had discussed the position in relation to transport and links to health facilities. The Transport Working Group had recommended that the Darzi changes should not be implemented until the transport problems had been addressed. The second meeting agreed the basis of the recommendations and the group were now awaiting the end of the consultation period.

Mr Lockwood referred to a booklet “Your Guide to Transport for Health in County Durham and Darlington” which had been produced by the Durham and Darlington Transport Partnership and gave information on all transport links to health facilities in Durham and Darlington. The Transport Working Group was currently looking at producing a similar document for the Easington area.

Members were advised that a Sub-Group was to be established to discuss staff travel planning as there needed to be accessible transport for staff. A sub-group would also be established which would look at the longer term issues for patients and visitors.

The Chair explained that the committee was concerned regarding the Darzi review and the implications for residents particularly to the south of the district. There were existing issues around transport and access to education, employment and health services. Darzi’s report outlined a degree of centralisation of specialism and the concern was that if services moved further away, patients may find it more difficult to access health services and family and friends may find it more difficult to visit and support. He added that he was somewhat reassured by what had been explained regarding the implementation of Darzi’s recommendations only when until the issue of transport was addressed but noted this was a recommendation only.

A Member referred to Durham County Council’s decision to review bus services and asked how it would impact on services to and from hospitals. Mr Lockwood explained that with regard to alterations to services that were subsidised, some slight impact may be felt but this had been minimised particularly on services to access health. Reduction in service had been chosen after extensive investigation and had been agreed at Durham County Council’s Cabinet the previous week. The impact on bus services to health facilities would be relatively minimal.

A Member explained that he was concerned regarding rural bus services and people travelling to University Hospital of North Tees and Bishop Auckland General Hospital and how services would affect those people who were not ill enough to travel by ambulance. He asked if using taxis was financially viable. Mr Lockwood explained

that taxis were sometimes used and some actions were being taken on cuts with demand responsive taxis.

The Chair explained that Durham County Council was a key partner and asked what the County Council's role and responsibilities would be in terms of identifying and facilitating solutions. Mr Lockwood explained that Durham County Council had overall responsibility of transport throughout the County. Where there were gaps in the service, the County Council would look to see what could be done. The Rural Transport Partnership would be more focussed and would be engaging more with the Local Strategic Partnership. The forthcoming Local Transport Plan 2 was to be finalised in March 2006 and a funding mechanism from government was included which set out the overall transport strategy. It was the first time that a capital stream had been included in the Local Transport Plan which could be used to renew community transport.

The Chair thanked Mr Lockwood for his attendance.

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

## **8 PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS**

The Executive Member for Regeneration had been invited to the meeting to update Members on progress and partnership working within his remit.

The Executive Member for Regeneration explained that the future policy emphasis for local government relied 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 was the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The Corporate Development Unit undertook a lead role in relation to LSP development and its performance management whilst the Regeneration and Partnerships Unit focused on the strategic use of the LSP's resources and managed the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund alongside other external resources such as Single Regeneration Budget, European Funds, Liveability and Lottery Funds. This placed partnership working at the heart of the authority and focused on the work of Funding and Programmes, Neighbourhood Renewal and Policy.

It was explained that key partnerships could generally be categorised and split into three functions – policy, facilitation and delivery.

The Executive Member for Regeneration explained that key partners dealing with strategic policy issues included the Local Government Association (LGA), the Coalfield Communities Campaign (CCC) and the Alliance for Regional Aid (ARA). Sub-Groups of the LGA were also of interest to the operation of regeneration within the district including the Commissions for Rural/Urban Communities.

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

The CCC was currently focussing upon a number of policy agendas, such as The Northern Way 'What is in it for ex Coalfields' including labour market supply/demand incentives. Problems of low educational attainment and poor

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health in coalfield areas were new lobbying areas for the CCC and they were looking to form new partnerships to address these issues.

Members were advised that closer partnership arrangements were developing with English Partnerships building upon the relationship established during the implementation of the coalfield programme. This particularly related to the research work involved in progressing the County Durham housing market work, the progression of the Brownfield Land Pilot Initiative where the Council had agreed to invest £350,000 allocation within its strategic use of reserves work and the continuing commitment to the Peterlee Master planning process.

Members were advised that there were 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 included:-

- **Regional Partnerships**

Aligning local priorities and actions with those identified within those forthcoming in the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy were being considered and developed. The Northern Way Agenda and the promotion of a City Region approach to regional planning was stimulating considerable debate amongst stakeholders as a new plan.

- **County Durham Strategic Partnership**

The partnership provided a facilitation of partners working towards the delivery of the County Durham vision. This was now to be aligned within the new Local Area Agreement Policy Agenda whereby County Durham had been identified and agreed as being a second wave pilot area.

The County Durham Economic Partnership was a mechanism whereby Single Programme Funding was agreed to bring forward actions to address the economic priorities of County Durham. Both partnerships worked closely together at the sub-regional level and had cross representation. The Executive Member for Regeneration, along with the Director of Regeneration and Development were members upon the Executive Group of the Partnership which dealt with sub-regional issues relating to priorities such as sites and premises, tourism, business support arrangements and the Major Centres Programme.

- **East Durham Local Strategic Partnership**

Implementation groups operated in the fields of environment, economy, crime, health, housing and learning and skills. The groups were still working to the thematic areas agreed in 2004 which were restoring reassurance, tackling social exclusion, health and equalities, sustainable communities, investing in young people and improving employment and enterprise.

For 2006/08 the LSP had been allocated £12.8m of NRF and £1.6m of Safer Stronger Communities Fund.

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) was to be piloted in Durham from April 2006. This had meant a review of the County Durham Strategic Partnership and its linkages with the District's LSP that meant there would

be an era of uncertainty as to delivery, PMF and governance arrangements under the LAA.

- **Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder**

One of the main successes of the District was the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder for Easington Colliery and Horden which had been operating for over three years with much progress to date. The aim was to bring joined up services to the area by focussing on better co-ordination and value for money. Unlike traditional regeneration initiatives, the Pathfinders funds were aimed at service improvement, enhancing and gap filling. This approach to helping the community to help itself was known as 'bending the spend'. The Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder continued to perform above the expectations of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Government Office for the North East and the District's Audit sections.

- **Community Regeneration Partnerships**

Closer working relationships had been developed between the District Council, the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) and the Community Empowerment Network. There was a growing consensus that a clearer and more focussed approach was required given the multitude of initiatives and the level of resources available to support current partnership structures. Community Regeneration Partnerships were at varying stages of development and differed in their structure, membership and effectiveness.

- **The Strategic Funding Group**

As the development of the LSP had come forward, its ability to attract wider external funding had increased dramatically since the inception of the LSP. As a result of the European Objective 2 and SRB, partnerships merged to form the beginnings of a strategic funding group to serve the LSP. The purpose of the process was to establish a vehicle that could consider how best to use external funding to address the priorities and actions that were forthcoming from the LSP. The group currently had approved powers for EU Structural Funds for Objective 2 Priority 4, SRB and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The group considered the best use of resources from wider bodies and partnerships which include lottery funding, Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, Surestart, Urban 2, Single Programme, wider European structural funds, Liveability, Coalfield Regeneration Trust, Northern Rock and charities. The Audit Commission had recommended the authority as a model of good practice through the CPA process.

- **Liveability Group**

The Liveability Group had overseen the delivery of a range of service improvements and partner projects that had worked towards enhancing the quality of life in the district. The programme's largest element which set out to improve derelict land and buildings had developed a close working relationship with English Partnerships National Brownfield Land Pilot which was expected to offer support and advice for future schemes.

- **East Durham Business Service**

East Durham Business Service continued to be heavily involved with Easington Action Team for Jobs and Easington Primary Care Trust in driving forward the Aim High Routeback Project that aimed to support people off incapacity benefit and back into work. The Business Service was also leading the East Durham Business Centre project that would 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 was due to commence at the end of November 2005.

- **East Durham Business Forum**

East Durham Business Forum represented all businesses located in East Durham giving them a voice within the local community on the issues that were important to them.

- **Seaham and Peterlee Regeneration Partnerships**

Seaham Regeneration Partnership continued to work on delivering the remaining flagship projects of the Seaham Regeneration Strategy. Modus Properties had undertaken a public consultation event with the Seaham Partnership to inform the final designs of the town centre scheme. Planning approval had since been given and the commencement of work on site was expected to start early in 2006.

St John's Square area of the town was now in a position to begin progressing the recommendations of the prepared Master Plan and it was expected work could commence towards the latter part of 2006/7.

The North Dock area of the harbour had also been subject to a Master Planning exercise. Discussions with funding bodies were now at an advanced stage and if successful the next stage of works could commence around Easter 2006.

Work had also recently been concluded on the reclamation of the former Seaham Colliery. A consultation had been undertaken to determine an appropriate end use for the site which determined that the site should be developed for housing and approximately 400 units would be constructed. It was likely house building works would start on site early 2007.

- **Peterlee**

English Partnerships now had a remit for regeneration of new towns. English Partnerships in conjunction with the District of Easington, Peterlee Town Council and Durham County Council had therefore formed a partnership to oversee the renaissance of Peterlee. A Peterlee Regeneration Framework report was commissioned in 2005. This had identified the key issues facing Peterlee. A Regeneration Partnership of elected Members had been formed comprising all public authorities with a stake in Peterlee. It was likely this partnership would meet formally for the first time in the New Year.

A Member referred to a meeting that had been held the previous night in the Welfare Hall in Easington Colliery and explained that no matter how many social houses were built, a section of the community would not be able to afford them and

asked if there were any signs of higher paid jobs coming into the district. The Executive Member for Regeneration explained that the ratio of average earnings was approximately £17,000 - £18,000 per year compared to the average house price of £90,000 - £100,000. The rise in house prices was good news for home owners but not if they were unable to sell or buy a new home, therefore wages needed to be higher.

The Director of Regeneration and Development explained that the remodelling of the industrial estate was in progress to create the best conditions for people to invest. Land was identified at Hawthorn for a Prestige Business Park and the Council were working in partnership with the University of Newcastle to establish 'The GREAT Institute' and a report was being prepared to explore the economic benefits of this. More business start ups were required and a funding bid was being prepared for the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative. This was a highly competitive process and out of eighty eight authorities bidding, only thirty would be approved. £150m was available and the Council could receive between £2m and £10m if successful.

The Executive Member for Regeneration explained that Easington could be left to manage decline and housing was integral to retain the population. The District Council needed to maximise the use of the A19 and the infrastructure and look at the A19 and A1 link.

A Member explained that he been approached by a local business man for advice on building a Travel Lodge in the district. The Director of Regeneration and Development explained that a study had been carried out for hotel investment on the A19 corridor. Two sites had been identified one on the South West Industrial Estate and the other at Dalton Park, being the only locations that possible investors would consider. East Durham Business Service could help any member of the public who had a business idea and members of the public should be advised to contact Peter Rippingale at East Durham Business Service.

A Member commented that housing demand for new houses was very strong. The Director of Regeneration and Development explained that the Local Plan was currently being reviewed. If too much greenfield land was released then the social/balanced housing need could not be addressed. Every new house that was built would count against the allocation that the district would be given in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (i) the information given and the positive progress made be noted;
- (ii) the report be referred to the Executive for information.

**9 IDEA MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – FEEDBACK REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services and Administration which informed Members of the Scrutiny Committees of the feedback received from the Improvement and Development Agency IDeA in respect of the Member Development Project undertaken by them, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

The aim of the project was to “adopt a sustainable strategic approach to Member development identifying needs linked to the Council’s Corporate Objectives and Priorities, Members’ community and leaderships roles as well as their individual roles within the Council”. The project also aimed to produce Personal Development

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Plans for elected Members and a training strategy linked to the Council's corporate priorities, improvement agenda and Members' own needs.

The Scrutiny Support Manager explained that the findings of the IDeA were attached at Appendix C. The IDeA feedback report identified general areas of future action for improvement in terms of supporting the take up of Member training and development. Additionally, specific areas of follow up work in respect of the development of scrutiny were also highlighted. The Member Development Steering Group would be co-ordinating the production of a detailed Member development programme.

The Chair requested that the Scrutiny Support Manager produce an action plan for positive and prompt changes and report back to the committee in January 2006.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (i) the information given, be noted;
- (ii) the Scrutiny Support Manager produce an action plan and report back to the committee in January 2006.

JC/MA/com.part./051101  
17 November 2005