

**POLICY SCRUTINY PANEL**

**3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2006**

**Present:** Cllr Pape (in the Chair) and Councillors Cowper, Hepplewhite, Leake, Norman, Walker and Wynn.

**Also Present:** Councillors Holland, Howarth, Lightly, Marsden, McDonnell, Robinson and Turnbull.

NB In the absence of Councillor Simmons (Chair) and Councillor Freeman (Vice Chair), the Chairman of Scrutiny had, at its Meeting on Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2006, sought the consent of the Scrutiny Committee for him to Chair this Policy Scrutiny Panel Meeting. The Scrutiny Committee had agreed that, rather than rearrange or cancel the Meeting, in this instance, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee chair the Policy Scrutiny Panel Meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2006.

**Apologies for Absence:** Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Simmons, Freeman, Gill, Pitts and Syer,

**Bullet Points from the Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2006**

The Bullet Points from the Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2006, were approved as a correct record.

**BULLET POINTS**

- Ann Armstrong, Corporate Policy Officer with Durham County Council, was in attendance to discuss with Members, the County Council's perspective in relation to Joint Charters.
- Liz Charles of Durham Rural Community Council was also in attendance to outline the work of the DRCC and her own role in the development of Joint Charters.
- A supporting handout was circulated to Members which outlined the development of three-way Charters between Durham County Council, District Councils and Town/Parish Councils.
- Members had also been provided with, an Executive Summary of a report on Charters from the Commission for Rural Communities, a Model Charter suggested by the Department of Communities and Local Government and a copy of the Tripartite Charter between the Parish Councils of Easington District, the District of Easington Council and Durham County Council.
- Members were informed that Charters would provide for Enhanced Roles for Parish Councils, improved Working Relationships between Parish and Principal Councils, better Community Planning, written Rights and Responsibilities, agreed Compacts and Proper Consultation and Involvement.

NB Cllr Leake joined the Meeting at 5.44pm

- Durham Rural Community Council covered the whole of County Durham and worked in support of Rural areas, particularly in respect of Capacity Building issues, Social Exclusion, Village Halls and Affordable Housing.
- There was current involvement in a Rural Social and Community Programme, funded by DEFRA, which was a two year programme, ending in March, 2008.

- As the DRCC had traditionally offered support for Town and Parish Councils, it was now involved in Charter Development both on a Joint and an Individual basis, over a five year timescale.
- It was the intention to examine how best to build and incorporate Charters into Local Development Frameworks.
- It was pointed out that the County Council has now adopted a more “arms length” position in relation to Charter Development as this was now the role of Liz Charles.
- However, the County Council had developed its own Steering Group to take forward both Charter Development and supporting activities and the Steering Group had developed a two year Action Plan to underpin and support the County Council’s commitment to Charters.
- Both Ann Armstrong and Liz Charles responded to Members’ questions throughout the Meeting and the Chairman thanked them both for their attendance and their comprehensive and informative briefing.

The Meeting Terminated at 6.20pm