

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (EXTERNAL)

14TH AUGUST 2008

PRESENT	Councillor Alan Anderson (Chair) Councillors Bowser, Mrs. Jopling, V. Shuttleworth and Mr. John Raw (co-optee)
ADVISERS	R. Bowman, Scrutiny Manager and Cllr. Mr. Jeff Gale

26. INTERVIEW WITH COUNCILLOR MR. JEFF GALE

The Chair thanked Cllr. Gale for his attendance. The Chair led the questioning:

What was your role in the CDRP?

Cllr. Gale was not quite sure at first what his role in the partnership was to be. He described the partnership as very officer led, especially by officers of Durham County Council and the police. There was very little community input. Following discussions involving Cllr. Gale, elected member involvement was invited.

Members questioned whether Cllr. Gale had the chance to input into the proceedings and whether his input was ever acted on. In response he stated that he was always asked what his opinion was, although most of the discussions he was involved in were strategic, not on-the-ground things into which he could have a say.

What contribution does Wear Valley District Council make to the CDRP and how could it be improved?

In the past former acting Chief Executive Michael Laing attended alongside the Community Safety Manager. Combined with the input of Cllr. Gale, the Council had a large voice on the partnership. The operational input of the Council was broad and included, for example, the work of the Street Wardens, although Cllr. Gale stated that Street Wardens were not there to replace the police.

Members questioned whether there were any figures available to show the impact that the Street Wardens have had on the work of the partnership. Cllr Gale replied that there were not, to his knowledge. He went on to state that there may be many situations where crime has gone down as a result of Street Warden interventions. The impact was, however, hard to identify as often their contribution is made through cooperation with the police.

What in your opinion are the main issues with the CDRP as it currently operates, and how in your opinion can they be addressed?

The main issue facing the Wear and Tees CSP is the continuation of it. There will need to be someone on it representing the District in some form. The fact that the partnership is officer-led raises questions of whether there is sufficient grass-roots input to communicate the concerns of residents.

What are the main issues facing the CDRP in the immediate future, and how in your opinion can they be addressed?

LGR was highlighted by Cllr. Gale as one of the main issues facing the partnership. How structures would develop following the transition to unitary local government was of vital importance. Cllr Gale's overall opinion of the partnership was that it was an excellent way of accessing senior police officers.

The Chair thanked Cllr. Gale for his valuable input. Councillor Gale left the meeting at 4:30pm

27. PROPOSED DIRECTION OF THE CDRP REVIEW

Members viewed the report of the Scrutiny Manager and discussed the recommendations within it. All the recommendations were approved by the Committee.

CHAIR

The meeting concluded at 4:50pm