

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 1 AUGUST, 2006

REVIEW OF EAST DURHAM LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE – LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MANAGER

(i) What is your role within the LSP and which Officers from the District Council supported the LSP and its Sub Groups?

The LSP Manager explained that his role was a co-ordinating role which supported the LSP and the LSP Executive. The LSP Executive comprised six Thematic Sub Group Chairs. Jane Bellis was the Partnerships Support Assistant and worked with him to support the LSP. Their role included the monitoring of Performance Management and have a working knowledge of local statistics.

There was a lot of linkages with the Regeneration Unit and Ray Brewis, the Principal Regeneration Officer and Bev Curry, the Regeneration Support Officer done a lot of work with the Strategic Funding Group. Norman Hunt, the Policy and Homeless Manager was also Deputy Chair of the Housing Implementation Group and was supported by Marie Smith, the Strategy Officer. Heather Lang, Economic Development Officer at the East Durham Business Service also supported Richard Prisk, the Director of Regeneration and Development who chaired the Economy Group.

(ii) Where had the LSP been most and least effective so far?

The LSP Manager explained that the LSP had been very effective in a lot of the cross working partnerships that had been established. He explained it was difficult for the LSP to claim credit as it was mainly partnership working. Decent Homes, health and educational attainment required more resources to improve.

He explained that in the past there had been no substance misuse service which was now provided since the establishment of the LSP and the waiting and referral time was immediate. Clients needed to be on a Substance Misuse Programme for eleven weeks and the Government had indicated that sixty five per cent must stay on the programme for eleven weeks.

There had been no fire related deaths for more than three years and the NRF had supported smoke alarms. Children at primary school level were on par with the national average but at Key Stage 3, results were poor and the District was falling away from the rest of the country.

It was hoped that East Durham Homes would achieve the Two Star status which would help to meet the Decent Homes Standard. There was a pilot currently ongoing to tackle Incapacity Benefit to see how many of the 10,700 people could work again. The PCT had an Officer based at the East Durham Business Service who supported small businesses who did not have a Personnel Section to support long term sick back into work.

(iii) Were the LSP Sub Groups equally as effective in terms of structure and outcomes?

The LSP Manager explained that the Sub Groups were not equally as effective and it largely depended on the Chair. When the Performance Management Framework was introduced each Group were responsible for setting their own targets. Some were easy to do because they were Government targets. Some of the Sub Groups had been cancelled at short notice and some did not readily report back into the main LSP Group.

(IV) How did the LSP ensure that full benefits of sharing data information between partners were obtained?

The LSP Manager explained that there was a number of statistical web sites, some of which were very useful although there was no information to back up the knowledge on the super output areas and it was very difficult to receive ward breakdowns.

(V) What steps could the LSP take to ensure wider involvement in its work?

The LSP Manager explained that there was a requirement to attend the implementation groups and Easington had a two tier area. There had been a problem with partners attending from the Learning and Skills Council as adult education needed to be supported. It had now been agreed to have quarterly meetings with the Learning and Skills Council where all seven Districts would come together rather than the Learning and Skills Council going to each individual LSP.

(VI) The LSP should be accountable to the community for its work. How was this accountability achieved, measured and reported back to the community? Was the membership of the LSP and its Sub Groups reflective of the community?

The LSP Manager explained that eighty eight Local Authority areas received Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and had been charged with setting up the Community Empowerment Network which represented the views of the voluntary and community sector.

In 2004, the ODPM had advised that there needed to be a protocol between the LSP and the Community Empowerment Network. Six places had been made available for representatives of the CEN to attend the LSP Executive and no other LSP had done this before. The LSP was not a public meeting and did not advertise for members of the public to attend. There were seventy eight people on the invitation list and the venues were rotated between community centres throughout the District.

(VII) How effective was the LSP communicating its achievements/non achievements?

The LSP Manager explained that a Communication Strategy was put in place the previous year. At the core of the LSP was only the LSP Manager and the Partnership Support Assistant, who were provided with a Chair's report from the six Thematic Groups. The Chairs were all asked if there was anything which they wanted to publicise, this often was returned blank.

There was an LSPTV in Building 1 at the Council Offices, Dalton Park, the Glebe Centre and the Robin Todd Centre. Government Office North East had criticised the LSP for spending too much money on publicity but Whitehall had thought it was a great idea.

(VIII) What arrangements were in place within the Council to report upon the activities of the LSP and what did the LSP Manager think the level of awareness within the Council of the LSP and its role was?

The LSP Manager explained that there were no formal reporting mechanisms. He felt that approximately 90% of employees would be aware of the LSP but would not know what it actually did. The District Council Members that attended were Councillors Crute, Patterson, Napier and Burnip. A lot of ward Councillors who did not have an executive role would normally have attended through the CEN but now the CEN would only allow Parish and Town Council representatives and not District or County Council Members.

(IX) How effective was the LSP at raising awareness of its activities to partner organisations in the community?

The LSP Manager explained that partner organisations were aware of service improvement activities. Partners had been advised to bring to the LSP their biggest single problem rather than items they would not fund themselves. A large promotional campaign targeting males to reduce the incidents of cancer was to be carried out.

Councillor Mrs Connor explained that she had been a Member of the Community Network but once elected as a District Councillor could not represent them any more. One of the big successes to come out of the LSP was the Wingate and Horden Family Centres.