**PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER, 2006**

**REVIEW OF EAST DURHAM LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE, ALAN CAYGILL, EAST DURHAM HOMES AND CHAIR OF THE HOUSING SUB GROUP – HOUSING SUB GROUP**

(I)    **What was the role of the Sub-Group within the LSP and which Members/Officers from the District Council supported it?**

A. Caygill explained that the role of the Sub-Group was to work with partners to deliver the aims and objectives of the Group which were:-

* improving the appearance of our communities;
* improving quality of life of vulnerable people;
* increase the options and improve the quality and range of accommodation across the district;
* reduce the impact of anti-social behaviour on community life.

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

A. Caygill explained that the Group had established an Accredited Landlord Scheme, improved services for homeless people, developed an older persons housing strategy, constructed a new women's refuge, had successful applications from NRF for housing improvements, fit for purpose housing strategy, joint protocol with Centrepoint for 16-17 year olds, supported housing for people with learning difficulties and mental health problems, improvements in energy efficiency and the Clark House Partnership Project between private sector organisations and DAMHA.

Significant progress had been made against floor targets. Energy efficiency was improving and on target and had a SAP rating of 63. Homelessness was reducing well ahead of target, over 700 - 800 representations had been made previously and this had been reduced to as low as 300 the previous year.  The target had been achieved for development on brownfield  land.  The national average was 65% and 85% had been achieved although this would be difficult to sustain because of the lack of available brown field land.  The percentage of local authority owned non-decent dwellings was increasing.  This was due to a lack of capital to bring about massive change and a lot hinged on the recent Audit Commission inspection.

A. Caygill explained that areas for improvement included pooling resources to produce more efficient outcomes for residents, reducing the number of empty properties in the District, identifying cost cutting changes in  service provision to address diversity, engaging with hard to reach groups, assessing customer satisfaction with LSP supported schemes involving partners in development service standards for environmental quality and establishing a construction related training scheme for socially excluded young people.  He indicated that the Council's partners were keen to be involved in this particularly as a means to improve employment opportunities and increase the local skills base in the construction industry.

(III) **Are the LSP Sub-Groups equally as effective in terms of structure and outcomes?**

A Caygill explained that this was not an easy question and there may be more interest from community groups on some of the other implementation groups. The Action for Housing and Community Sub-Group had found it difficult to attract community representation.

(IV) **How does the LSP ensure that full benefits of sharing data and information between partners is obtained?**

A. Caygill explained that the Chairs of each Sub-Group met on a regular basis to exchange information in order to prevent duplication.

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

A. Caygill explained that communication was limited and segregated into particular service areas. He added that he was not sure whether the public actually knew about the LSP other than people who sat on the Group. The LSP had a Communications Group and this was not used as it should be. There was also limited use of the media. The LSP had a website but he didn't think this was being used to its full capacity.

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

A. Caygill explained that the LSP had members from the Community Empowerment Network (CEN) and representatives from Parish and Town Councils. There was a good cross section of LSP membership. The CEN also sat on the Implementation Groups and the Executive and the full LSP but was not sure this was sufficient to demonstrate accountability.

(VII) **How effective was the LSP at communicating its achievements/non-achievements and those of the Sub-Group?**

A. Caygill explained that this question was answered in communications and unless communications was effective, people would not appreciate the work that was being carried out.

(VIII) **What arrangements were in place within the Sub-Group to report upon its activities and what were the reporting mechanisms from the Sub-Group to the LSP?**

A. Caygill explained that themes had been introduced for each meeting and every partner, including the CEN, allocated responsibility for a presentation to the Group and responded to comments in relation to the presentation. Membership was reflective of the scope of the group and had representatives from private landlords, registered social landlords, supported housing groups, the community and representatives from the Health and Environment Sub-Groups.

(IX) **How effective was the LSP and the Sub-Groups at raising awareness of its activities to partner organisations and the community?**

A. Caygill advised that as explained earlier, communications were very limited.