

Report to: Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee
Date: 19th November 2007
Report of: Report of Head of Regeneration and Partnerships
Subject: Service Unit Performance Reporting - Regeneration and Partnerships
Ward: All

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide information on the performance of the Regeneration and Partnerships Unit.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 Consultation has taken place with the staff of the Regeneration and Partnerships Unit, the Executive Member for Regeneration and the Director of Regeneration and Development.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Regeneration and Partnerships Unit operates at the centre of the Districts regeneration activity and is fundamental to the District Councils activities in bringing forward change through partnership activity. It engages with many internal services and external partners to ensure that new and innovative ways of addressing local issues can be brought forward. The unit delivers against the following corporate and locally agreed priorities;

Quality services for our people

A sustainable job for everyone

Clean, tidy communities

Better transport

Sustainable communities.

Facilitating and coordinating the regeneration of the District the unit plays a significant role in developing and progressing the Sustainable Communities agenda throughout East Durham, acting as a central point in liaison with partners in bringing forward appropriate actions for making improvements across East Durham. In particular:

- It leads in the co-ordination of major infrastructure projects delivered through partnerships (Town Centre Regeneration, Road Infrastructure, Environmental / Open Space schemes, colliery reclamation, housing developments and land and building redevelopment)
- It leads on developing and implementing innovative interventions and programmes to address local problems (Neighbourhood Pathfinder, Neighbourhood Renewal, Safer Stronger Communities Fund etc)
- It assesses future funding requirements for the regeneration of the district
- It supports inclusiveness, engagement and involvement through the development and implementation of Community based partnerships and

forums including the Community Network and the development of the East Durham Community Development Trust.

- It supports the co-ordination of Community Enterprise throughout the District.
- It is acting as a lead contact in the progression of the Durham Housing Coalfields Initiative for the District
- It leads on lobbying and promoting opportunities to address economic, housing and transport issues across the District

3.0 Position Statement & Options Appraisal

Current work programmes for each section of the unit are outlined below and progress, achievements and non - achievements are highlighted in appendix 1 in relation to these:

3.1 Major Projects

The service has continued to manage and facilitate large infrastructure, investment and development projects (East Durham Link Road, Hawthorn Business Park, Seaham St John's Square, Seaham / Murton Colliery sites, the GREAT initiative and North Dock feasibility studies and first phase development etc.). The service undertakes the lead role for the Council in relation to the Peterlee master planning process and is now at a point where the second phase of work is nearing completion.

The Unit has also facilitated work to complete economic appraisals for Dawdon, Horden and Easington Colliery as part of the Durham Coalfield Housing Initiative. Easington Colliery and Dawdon have been identified as early priorities for the first 3 years of the Durham Coalfield Housing Initiative and draft funding programmes have been completed for the consideration of funding partners in the coming months.

Peterlee Masterplan has been subject to an economic appraisal and a subsequent exercise is to be undertaken to establish a delivery programme for the next 15 – 20 years with key partners. The feasibility work relating to Peterlee and Coalfield Housing that has been undertaken to date has been used as the basis of an expression of interest for a Housing 'Growth Point' bid to Government to cover the sub region. This initiative would attract resources and greater flexibility in relation to housing numbers.

The consideration of how Peterlee and the Durham Coalfields work will be delivered is currently being deliberated by key partners at present and

The groundbreaking ceremony for the start of the East Durham link road leading to Hawthorn Business Park has commenced and has now progressed onto site.

Seaham North Dock has secured its funding package and arrangements are being put in place to secure project management arrangements and establish a community investment company to drive the project forward. Construction is expected to commence in the Spring / Summer 2008.

Seaham Town Centre Retail site is now complete and the official opening was undertaken on Friday 16th November.

The unit has led on the recent enquiry to establish a “Media Village” on the strategic reserve site south of Seaham which has undertaken pre planning public consultations along with the English Partnerships / Network Space Initiative proposed for the Murton Colliery site. Planning submissions are anticipated for both of these schemes prior to the New Year.

The regeneration approach to Seaham has recently been recognised in the press as a good example in ‘place shaping and transformational regeneration’. The Chair of One NE (the regional development agency), Margaret Faye highlight that the regeneration approach to Seaham was an example to the region. English Heritage has also identified Seaham as National good practise in its approach to heritage led regeneration of the built environment.

3.2 Regeneration Initiatives

The unit has continued the management and administration of regeneration funds (Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Single Regeneration Budget, and assisted in the coordination and preparation of Lottery Funding / community grants). The successful delivery of the Governments Liveability Pilot has been recognised both regionally and nationally as best practice. The £12.893M NRF allocation made to the District has been successfully allocated for the 2006-08 period and monitoring of progress is underway. NRF expenditure balanced to within 0.5% of budget for the financial year 06-07. The annual allocation for 07/08 period is £6,067,583. At the end of quarter 2 (07/08), expenditure is balanced in an overspend position of 1.6% above profile.

The team has established systems for managing Safer Stronger Communities Fund a fund that brings together funding under the umbrella of the Local Area Agreement. Currently funding for the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, The Neighbourhood Element in North Peterlee, The Community Empowerment Network and Building Safer Communities has been included in this programme that will encompass other funding in future.

Work on developing and monitoring European programmes is now all undertaken by Government Office however support to local projects is still offered throughout the team

Work is ongoing with the major projects team to maximise single programme funding for major projects developing in the district. This work will inform future capital needs for the district. This work is continuing and will help inform the draft Regeneration Statement for East Durham and the draft sub regional economic strategy for County Durham.

Within the recent service review it is proposed that the function of community development became integrated into the activity of the Regeneration and Partnerships Unit. It is envisaged that the proposed changes will enable a greater flow of information with regard to community issues into regeneration processes. This will include shaping the work of

major developments, informing innovative schemes such as the Neighborhood Pathfinders and Liveability initiatives such as Pride in Easington as well as ensuring that the priorities of external funding are influenced by community priorities.

Conversely, the dissemination of information of regeneration activities, performance and proposals will potentially become more effective. By increasing the effectiveness of this dialogue it is hoped that a greater understanding can be achieved between the new Community Development Trust and the LSP, the Council and its constituency, officers, councilors and members of the public at the local level in relation to forthcoming regeneration work. The policy emphasis upon community engagement needs to be balanced with the statutory political processes, the need to engage meaningfully with communities, and the direction of wider regeneration priorities.

3.3 Neighbourhood Management

The former water works site (Paradise Lane, Easington Colliery) was brought back into use as the "Healthworks". Redevelopment work was completed on schedule in October 2007 and John Cummings MP officially opened the building on the 5th November 2007. This partnership-based project includes significant private sector (Northumbrian Water) investment as well as support from the PCT, Police, Council, LSP and Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder. With effect from the 15th October 2007 the Easington/Horden Pathfinder sub-team has been co-located alongside other partner bodies and stakeholders in the Neighbourhood Management process. The involvement of the Voluntary/Community Sector is increasing, for example, Age Concern is now permanently based on-site whilst organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau will be holding regular surgeries.

The Council's Housing Services Unit is progressing the matter of sustaining the learning and best practise established by the Empty Property intervention across the District. Accordingly, an Empty Properties Officer was recently appointed and takes up their duties imminently. Following the Police and Council roll - out of the Police Community Support Officer (PCSOs) and Graffiti Removal Service respectively, the Smoking Cessation intervention is the latest to be mainstreamed by the PCT. Two further 'service improvement interventions' relating to the effective operation and performance of the Healthworks have recently been introduced. The Pathfinder has provided leverage funding to pump prime the posts of Health & Fitness Development Officer and Information & Support Officer until 2008/9. Like numerous previous health based interventions, the PCT have committed to identifying the resources needed to mainstream both posts in the longer term.

As previously reported numerous smaller scale service improvement interventions and/or capital schemes continue to be conceived and implemented. Each are appraised by a panel of officers and trained Board Members in order to ensure their plausibility, sustainability and relevance to Neighbourhood Management, Safer Stronger Communities Fund and Local Area Agreement outcomes.

After a search for suitable short and long term accommodation, the 'North Peterlee' sub-team relocated to a temporary office base within Lee House

(Peterlee Town Centre) with effect from the 7th October 2007. The short-term tenancy is due to lapse at the end of the financial to coincide with their move to new-build premises at Eden Hill. An appropriate Service Level Agreement is currently being negotiated with the lead partner, (East Durham Community Development Trust). Building work is currently on schedule.

During this reporting period the North Peterlee Pathfinder continues to generate local interest in the Neighbourhood Management approach to regenerating disadvantaged communities. Graffiti Removal, Street Warden and Police 'Head-cam' interventions have already commenced whilst a variety of young people orientated measures are currently under development with prospective partner agencies. One exciting example development being 'Lifewise' – Centrepont, District Council and Neighbourhood Management supporting local young people in the development of life skills. As with the Easington/Horden Pathfinder, numerous smaller scale service improvements and/or capital schemes that contribute towards agreed outcomes have also served as 'quick wins'.

In partnership with the East Durham and Derwentside LSPs, the Easington/Horden, North Peterlee and Stanley Pathfinders have collaboratively developed a Performance Management Framework. This development has been recognised nationally as best practice in terms of local partners successfully influencing the LAA (National Neighbourhood Management Network Conference – "Neighbourhood Management and the LAA", 10th October 2007).

In addition the Bishop of Beverley, who holds the tackling deprivation portfolio, visited the Pathfinder on the 23rd October 2007 and commended their work as a tangible example of a 'bottom up' neighbourhood initiative that was "really making a difference". The achievements of the Pathfinder have been further recognised on the national stage to the extent that the former Secretary of State for Overseas Development (Clare Short MP) has asked to visit as part of her on-going national review of 'participative democracy' and public engagement in the public realm, (21st November 2007).

The joint 'Neighbourhood Programmes Team', currently has one vacancy, the Community Involvement Worker for Easington/Horden left on the 5th November 2007 to take up an assistant manager position with a local Registered Social Landlord's growing Neighbourhood Management Service. An advertisement to attract a replacement shall be issued during November 2007. Due to the relatively short term nature of the fixed term contract period advice is being taken on flexible employment and/or secondment options.

4.1 Policy, Promotion & Planning

Additionally, work has been undertaken to support emerging regeneration policy for the benefit of the District this has included the formulation and contribution to reports relating to; the Northern Way, the Regional Spatial Strategy, Local Transport Plan, Local Public Service Agreements, Local Area Agreements, Safer Stronger Communities Fund, European Funding Issues post 2006 and progressing the balancing housing markets agenda within a sub regional context and Coalfield Communities Campaign issues. This has

resulted in the requirement to establish a regeneration statement for the District towards which the Unit is leading on in terms of its content and coordination.

Due to the changing management arrangements relating to East Durham Homes, project based work such as finalising the Parkside Housing Scheme and the developing work programme of the Coalfield Housing Market Renewal Areas have also had a significant impact upon the work of the unit.

The facilitation of visits and presentations regarding the District has continued to be undertaken, including Investors and Developers, Commission for Rural England, English Partnerships, the Princes Foundation, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Local Government Information Unit, the Regional Development Agency, the Regional Housing Board and the National Association of Councillors and continues to raise the profile of the opportunities and problems of the district. More recently visits have been facilitated for the CPA Inspection Tour, the Lord Lieutenant of County Durham, the Audit Commission, the Minister for the Regions, new District Councillors and Durham and Wearside Common Purpose training programme.

The Unit continues to be requested to facilitate regional and national workshops in relation to the use and management of external funding. This was due to a recommendation by the Audit Commission in response to their findings within the CPA process. The Unit has also been requested to present good practise in relation to community engagement by the LGIU (Quality Towns and Parish Councils), the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and at the 3rd National Liveability Conference (ODPM).

The Audit Commission Regeneration Inspections in County Durham in 2006/2007 heavily involved members of the unit. Staff were involved in preparing for the inspections that were undertaken in early 2007 with final reports expected in June / July 2007.

The unit has achieved the requirement to achieve Priority Service Outcome GG02 as part of the E government agenda. This will enhance community accessibility to information and opportunities via the internet. The pages for the community link page are now live within the District Councils website and further development of the content within the pages is planned. This work has tied into the CRM Kiosk development across the district.

Finally it should be recognised that the unit's service plan has not as yet been fully reviewed.

As a result of policy and funding changes as well as an increasing emphasis on community engagement and involvement the work content of the unit in the medium term is likely to change focus as described earlier in the report. This has brought forward the requirement to undertake a review of the functions of the unit and has been incorporated with the medium term financial planning exercise the Council has undertaken.

5.0 Implications

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications other than those outlined in the appendix

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications

Policy Implications

There are no policy implications.

Risk Implications

A risk assessment has been completed and the necessary actions required to effectively manage the identified risks have been implemented.

Communications

There are no Communications implications

6.0 Corporate Implications

Corporate Plan and Priorities

The report outlines the teams activities and achievements in line with Corporate and Community Planning. The attached Report outlines how the service will function if the forthcoming review is agreed.

Equality and Diversity

The report has no additional implications for Equality and Diversity, although the Unit has completed a departmental self-assessment in relation to the quality standard for local government and has provided the opportunity for all staff to undertake relevant training.

E- Government

The report outlines some work being undertaken by the unit towards achieving the IEG Priority Service Outcome GG02. (See 4.11)

Procurement

There are no procurement implications

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 That members note the contents of the report, and the positive progress made by the unit.

Background Papers/Documents referred to

1. Unit Evidence Files
2. Risk assessment matrix.

