

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
TO PROMOTE STRONG HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee to Promote Strong Health and Safe Communities held at County Hall Durham on **Wednesday 5 June 2002 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present

Councillor M Nicholls in the Chair

Members of the Sub-Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, Blenkinsopp, Coates, Douthwaite, Ebbatson, Fenwick, Hogan, Mrs Howarth, Mrs Hunter, G Hunter, Myers, Priestley, Quigley and Stradling

Other Members:

Councillors Firby, Hodgson, Pye and Watson

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 March 2002 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor J Armstrong declared an interest in relation to item 3 in connection with his membership of Derwentside Council for Voluntary Service.

3. Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)

Belinda Lewis of Chester le Street CVS gave a presentation about the Council for Voluntary Service and Volunteer Bureaux (for copy of presentation notes see file).

The CVS and Volunteer Bureaux were local development agencies providing the infra-structure support for voluntary and community groups in their relevant districts. Whilst the delivery of services in each area was distinct in

response to existing provision and local needs essentially the CVS and Bureaux offered

- direct support to enable the development of groups
- active citizenship
- office services
- newsletters and a directory of voluntary and community groups for the benefit of the district
- assistance and input into partnership working
- funding for future developments including research into strategic investment of CVS at county level and feasibility studies for a county-wide accountancy service

Central to all of the district based CVS organisations was the need to secure long-term sustainability and to maintain an adequate level of core funding that would enable them to deliver a quality service.

In relation to the funding issues Peter Brookes (Social Services Department) reported that the levels of funding in each district CVS differed and in some areas the County Council provided the majority of the funding whereas in others there was no County Council funding.

In relation to the funding issues, Belinda circulated a copy of the executive summary about strategic investment in the community and voluntary sector which had been prepared for the CVS network in January 2002 (for copy see file of Minutes). Councillor Ebbatson suggested that the issue of funding and sustainability of the CVS across the County Council area was an issue that the Scrutiny Sub-Committee may wish to examine in more depth.

Members also raised the issue of the involvement of Councillors in the work of the CVS.

Resolved

That arrangements be made for the Scrutiny Sub-Committee to give further consideration to the partnership relationship between the County Council and the CVS.

4. Violent Crime: Best Value Performance Indicators

Neil Kingston, Policy and Communications Officer with Durham Police Authority gave a presentation about violent crime and the best value performance indicators (for copy of presentation slides see file of Minutes).

Neil explained that violent crime was a complex, misunderstood phenomenon comprising three broad headings – violence against the person, sexual offences and robbery. Within those offences there were forty-one different categories and over one hundred actual notifiable offences. Whilst the trends

in violent crime were upwards part of this could be attributed to new counting rules introduced by the Home Office in 1998/99 and new crime recording standards introduced nationally in April 2002. However, the detection rate in Durham was one of the highest in the country.

Neil reported that nationally victimization was highest in the 14-19 age group and that there were about four times as many male suspects as female suspects; 75% of male victims and almost 90% of female victims knew the offender. As regards the influences on violent crime these included poor parenting; family breakdown and violence; truancy and school exclusion; limited access to leisure facilities; unemployment and alcohol and drug abuse. Some 40% of violent crimes, 78% of assaults and 88% of criminal damage were committed under the influence of alcohol.

Neil explained that there appeared to be some disparity between the best value performance indicator in relation to the County Council which positioned the County in the lower quartile, whilst the Police Authority best value performance indicator positioned the Constabulary in the upper quartile. It was difficult to ascertain the reason for the difference in the respective rankings although the figures for the Police Authority would also include offences committed within Darlington Borough Council area.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

5. Forward Plan

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny about the sections of the Forward Plan which were within the Sub-Committee's jurisdiction (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved

That the report together with the recommendation included therein be approved.

6. Work Programme

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny about the proposed work programme (for report see file of Minutes).

Resolved

That the report be noted.

7. Carrier Bag Culture Project: Update

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny about the "Carrier Bag Culture" which was the first project to be investigated in depth by the Sub-Committee (for report see file of Minutes).

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny reported that the Working Group had now met on two occasions, and had received presentations from the Police and the Youth Offending Team. Assistance was being provided from the Investing in Children Initiative in seeking the views of the young people and meetings of the Group were being held in local venues in the west of Easington District.

Resolved

That the report together with the recommendation included therein be approved.

8. White Paper: Valuing People – A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny advising upon a recent seminar about the Council's proposals in respect of learning disability services in response to a Government White Paper (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Mrs Hunter suggested that visits to Social Services and Education establishments should be included in the programme of County Council summer visits and new Members of the Authority should avail themselves of the opportunity to undertake visits.

Resolved

That the report and the recommendations contained therein be approved.