

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Promoting Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 16 June 2008** at **10.00 a.m.**

COUNCILLOR D Boyes in the Chair

Members of the Sub Committee:

Councillors Armstrong, A Bell, Bowman, B Harrison, D Maddison, Mavin, Nicholson, Shield, Stradling, L Thomson, Allen Turner, J Wilkinson, M Wood, and Wright.

Other Member:

Councillors Moran, and Willis.

Co-opted Members:

Mrs M English, Mr K Ibbotson, Mr B Scott and Councillor D Bates.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Potts, and Mrs H Gibbon.

A1 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Promoting Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee.

A2 Terms of Reference of the Committee

The Committee noted a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny regarding the Terms of Reference of the Committee, Membership for 2008/09, and the Dates of Meetings.

A3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A5 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

A6 Adult and Community Services- Overview of Directorate Priorities

The Committee received a presentation from Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director for Adult and Community Services (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

Her presentation included the strategic leadership team, statistical information, key strategic policy drivers, recent legislation and guidance, performance, crime reduction in County Durham, Corporate priorities for 2008/09, Challenges, and potential areas for scrutiny to look at.

The Corporate Director suggested that the Committee may wish to consider the following areas for potential future scrutiny projects:

- why people feel unsafe when there is a low rate of crime in the county, and how the fear of crime could be reduced.
- The Corporate Director referred to the recent scrutiny project which looked at the static gypsy and traveller sites in the county, and of the results arising from that, and suggested that a scrutiny group may like to look at whether more should be done to improve relationships in connection with the unauthorised encampments, particularly those travellers to Appleby Fair.
- Adult abuse is an area that has grown by 409% however the reasons for this may be due to better systems in place to register the abuse.
- Libraries as a facility to provide a community resource
- The impact of culture on wellbeing
- Mental health services

In response to a question from Councillor Shield, The Corporate Director advised that the mobile library service is expected to continue as at present. She pointed out that the 'books on wheels' service that provides additional support to the elderly is expected to be expanded.

In responding to a question from Councillor Bates the Corporate Director identified where staff for her service area were based.

Councillor Moran asked for an update in relation to the demolition of the Health Centre at Newton Aycliffe. The Corporate Director advised that the re-location of the library on that site is a long standing issue, the site however is now in process of being cleaned to accommodate the temporary site for the library. She was not aware whether the health centre would return to Newton Aycliffe.

A7 Overview of Local Area Agreement (LAA), Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Corporate Plan, and Performance Framework

The Committee received a presentation from Donna Jefferson, Senior Corporate Policy & Performance Officer which gave an Overview of the Local Area Agreement, The County Durham Sustainable Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan, and Performance Framework (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

Her presentation included national and regional strategies, the new agenda, strategy development, identification of priorities, key partnership principles and the county council mission, Sustainable Community Strategy Themes, LAA Themes, Corporate Plan Themes, Existing LAA Stretch Targets, Next Steps, and Action 2008/09.

In response to a question from Councillor Bates about how the new unitary authority would work closer with communities, particularly parish and town councils, Donna Jefferson explained that the Sustainable Community Strategy had been written in conjunction with partners, so they were all signed up to work together on this.

Councillor Wright suggested that the Committee follow up on the fear of crime scrutiny working group report to look to see whether their partners have taken on board the recommendations made. Tom Bolton, Principal Scrutiny Officer pointed out that the project was undertaken 2 years ago, and reviews had been undertaken. However, a further review of progress could be undertaken if members so wished. One of the recommendations had been for the Crime and Disorder Partnerships to jointly appoint a publicity officer.

In response to a question from Mr Scott about crime and disorder statistics, Peter Appleton, Head of Planning & Performance, Adult and Community Service, advised that he would arrange for a Community Safety Officer to liaise with Mr Scott on the issue.

Councillor Armstrong advised that the work programme should be comprehensive however he pointed out that members and officers would need to be committed to it, and that there was an issue relating to capacity. In order to avoid duplication they would assess the projects that had been undertaken by the former Promoting Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities Sub-Committee.

Councillor Stradling suggested that the Committee look at how to engage local groups to make a contribution in the new authority. It was suggested by Councillor Shield that with resources being limited they should take on a project that affects everyone in a community.

Councillor Harrison suggested that by undertaking a project such as fear of crime the Committee would undertake a piece of work than encapsulated a number of issues.

Councillor Wright suggested that once the previous projects had been reviewed the Committee move on and consider what had been undertaken in connection with LAA stretch targets.

Resolved:-

The Committee agreed that it would hold a Special meeting to determine its work programme. In order to assist members at the meeting members would receive a summary of the previous pieces of work undertaken by the former Sub-Committee.

A8 Excellent Partnerships Event

Tom Bolton, Principal Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee of an event to be held the following day at Wynyard Hall organised by the Regional Improvement Partnership. The regional event, 'Excellent Partnerships in the North East' offers a range of workshops and exhibitions which would be of use to officers and Members involved in partnerships, especially new Members and those involved in Scrutiny.

Members were asked to contact Julie Hodgson, or Heather Hirst from Human Resources if they wished to attend.