

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Building A Strong Economy** held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 20 June 2005** at 10:00 am.

Present:

COUNCILLOR Cordon in the Chair

Members:

Councillors Armstrong, Chaplow, Chapman, Coates, Fenwick, Forster, Knox, Magee, Pye, Simmons, Whitfield, and Young

Co-opted Members:

Cllr J Clark

Other Members:

Councillors Barker, Gray, Priestley, Stradling and Wright

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Southwell and Mrs Lewis

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2005 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A2 Terms of Reference

Members considered a report by the Head of Overview and Scrutiny explaining the Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted

A3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A4 Presentation – The Scope of the Sub-Committee

Members received a Presentation by Bob Ward, Head of Regeneration on the Scope of the Sub-Committee. He then answered Members questions.

Concerning graduate retention Councillor Cordon asked if Durham County Council was proactive with Durham University in encouraging graduates to stay in the County or if there was a strategy to encourage firms in NetPark to become proactive in this matter.

Bob Ward replied that there was a joint role in this and that there is a need to ensure that there are opportunities available for graduates. However, while many graduates do leave the area many do come back again. The University engages with the local community to encourage links with companies.

Councillor Fenwick said that the Northumbrian Tourist Board was a successful organisation which had been taken over by One North East. He asked if this was considered to be a successful take over and how it has developed

Bob Ward responded that it was difficult to ascertain the impact of the change at this stage. NTB was an effective but there was a feeling that a more agile and active body was required.

Councillor Barker referred to an article in the Northern Echo newspaper reporting that £100m was available for the Northern Way and he asked how much of this was for Durham. He added that £1.6 m was to be spent in Easington District on disability issues and referred to a report by Newcastle University. He asked who was co-ordinating this work.

Bob Ward said that £100m was being made available from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister but it was important to remember that this was not new money. The emphasis is on city regions and there was no direct initiative for Durham County. Referring to the issue of disability he advised Members that this related to a pilot project on worklessness in Easington and was driven in part by One North East and Job Centre Plus.

Councillor Stradling queried whether the priority on city regions and in particular town centres and market towns were the same as those selected under Urban Renewal. Bob Ward replied that there was an ongoing debate with One North East over this agenda as they appeared not to recognise the value of spending on town centres compared to job creation. Initially this initiative started with 6 proposals with each town allocated £2m. The programme was now approaching its conclusion.

The Chairman thanked Bob Ward for his presentation.

A5 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

A6 Performance Management Report - 3rd Quarter 2004/05

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy on performance of Best Value Performance Indicators for the 4th quarter for 2004/05 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A7 Report of Visit to Durham Tees Valley Airport

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny about the visit to Durham Tees Valley Airport (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted

A8 Work Programme

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

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny advised Members that having previously considered Modern Apprenticeships it was appropriate to look at the recommendations that were made and monitor progress.

Members have also suggested that the Strategic Alliance should be considered to determine how well it has performed.

Councillor Armstrong said as we are now in the second year since the Northumbrian Tourist Board was abolished and One North East assumed responsibility, we need to see where we are now with tourism. Bob Ward informed the meeting that there was good baseline information currently available and that this would be an appropriate time to begin the study. Councillor Pye suggested that the study begin with One North East as this would allow the Committee to focus on the appropriate issues relevant to tourism in County Durham.

Councillor Coates referred to the NetPark development and felt that it would be sensible to determine an appropriate time to review its progress. Bob Ward agreed but reminded Members that it was still at an early stage of development. The next building stage is not scheduled to begin for 12 months. It was suggested that at an appropriate time a further visit to NetPark should be made.

Resolved:

That a project about tourism be undertaken and the work programme attached to the report be noted.

A9. Dates of Future Meetings

Members noted the dates of future meetings of the Sub-Committee.