

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 11th September 2006** at **9.45 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor O'Donnell in the Chair.

Members:

Councillors Armstrong, Meir, Pye, Southwell, Stradling and Wade.

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Graham, Iveson, Young and M Iveson (Co-opted Member).

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In relation to Minute A6 "Tourism Report" Members were informed that Melanie Sensicle, Chief Executive of the Area Tourism Partnership would be making reference to the "Wish You Were Here" Tourism Scrutiny report during her presentation.

In addition Minute A7 presentation on the "County Durham Economy" by Bob Ward, Head of Economic Development, Members were informed that many of the issues raised would be tackled by the "Reducing the Level of Worklessness" Scrutiny Working Group.

A2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A3 Any items from Co-opted Members and interested parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or interested parties.

A4 Building a Strong Economy Quarter Performance 2006/07 and Improvement Priorities

The Sub-Committee considered a report from the Head of Corporate Policy providing an update on performance for Quarter 1 2006/07 and to seek the views of the Sub-Committee to inform the review of the Council's medium term improvement priorities (for copies of reports see file of Minutes).

In relation to priorities for improvement Members were informed that there is one priority area for improvement aligned to the Corporate Aim, Building a Strong Economy, Promoting Economic Well-being however within this theme there are three outcomes that have been identified as areas that the Authority want to improve:

- Reduction in the level of worklessness
- Increase of entrepreneurial activity
- More people with the skills to meet current and future business needs

Members highlighted the need to target/focus on young people and the need to direct them into Employment, Education or Training.

It was confirmed that within the Local Area Agreement there is a block which deals with Children and Young People and there is a need for a focus to be placed on economic aspects within that block, to get Young People into Employment, Education or training.

In addition Members raised the issue of Further Education Colleges and the need to target courses at those skill areas which employers need.

It was suggested that at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee Members consider reports relating to the Children and Young People's block of the Local Area Agreement focusing on economic well-being and the County Durham Economic Partnership.

Resolved:

That the report be noted and that at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee reports be considered on the County Durham Economic Strategy and the Children and Young People's block of the Local Area Agreement.

A5 Presentation from Melanie Sensicle - Area Tourism Partnership - The Work of the Partnership

The Sub-Committee considered a covering report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny together with a presentation from Melanie Sensicle, Chief Executive of the County Durham Tourism Partnership on the role, aims and objectives of the County Durham Tourism Partnership (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

During the presentation the following areas were covered:

- County Durham Tourism Partnership
 - Remit - strategic leadership for and co-ordination of tourism, County-wide
 - Not-for-profit, private sector-led company
 - Funders: ONE, Districts and County Council, Private Sector.
 - Total budget £650k per annum
- Destination Management
 - Business Support
 - Information provision
 - Marketing
 - Product Development
 - Visitor experience
 - Workforce Development
- Regional Context
 - One of four sub-regional partnerships
 - Represents Durham in regional decision-making and tourism management
 - One management team, two working groups - marketing and business support

- Priorities and Delivery
 - Priorities identified with Stakeholders
 - Direct delivery or delivery through others?
 - Action plan to deliver the County Strategy
 - Aim for consensus by December 2006
- Relationship of County Council to tourism partnership
 - Partnership responsible for all areas of destination management
 - County Council involved in at least 5 areas
 - County Council a key player in visitor experience, product development and information services
- Co-ordination and de-duplication of publicity materials
 - Customer focus
 - Clear offer and destination identity
 - 2 projects to get us there - segmentation and branding
 - Use common-sense to rationalise
- Tourism a low paid and low skilled industry
 - Address through regional initiatives
 - Take a fresh look at lifestyles and work modes
 - Recognise entrepreneurial nature of many tourism businesses
- Markets
 - More than one relevant to County Durham
 - Sectorial networks will drive some markets forward
 - Tourism partnership will sort and recommend markets
 - Overseas potential but needs resourcing

- Value -v- Volume
 - Increasing Value - sustainable tourism
 - May need to change our visitor profile
 - Segmentation a key tool to increasing spend
 - Long theming the Season also important
- KPIs
 - County uses STEAM model
 - 3 years of trends will help set targets
 - Destination Performance UK - KPIs nationally
 - County to work with nationally not unilaterally
- Strategic Vision
 - Area Tourism Management plan owned by tourism partnership but for whole Country.
 - Systematic and transparent evaluation of projects
 - ATMap a route to funding and support
 - Completion of ATMap - January 2007

Members raised the issue of signage in Durham City and the need for signs to be in various languages.

The Members were informed that work is currently taking place in relation to a signage and lighting strategy for the City.

The Sub-Committee was informed that in relation to attracting foreign tourists, the new Marketing Manager within the Tourism Partnership has a wealth of experience in the Overseas market and various initiatives are being looked at which are aimed at getting visitors to stay longer in County Durham. In addition work is being undertaken in relation to which foreign markets should be targeted.

Members raised the issue of working with other Local Authorities such as Hartlepool and Sunderland in promoting the County.

The Members were informed that Regional Network meetings take place on a monthly basis and work is currently taking place in relation to promoting Tees Valley and Durham in Ireland.

It was suggested that Melanie Sensicle return to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee to give an update on the progress made to date by the County Durham Tourism Partnership including a response to the recommendations in the "Wish You Were Here" and "Open for Business" reports and to provide further information in relation to ATMap.

Resolved:

That the recommendation contained in the report be approved.