

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 11 December 2006** at **9.30 a.m.**

Present

Councillor P Graham in the Chair

Members

Councillors Chaplow, Coates, Meir, O'Donnell, Pye, Simmons, Southwell, Stradling and Wade.

Other Members:

Councillor Carroll, Gray and Nicholls.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carr and Young.

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A3 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items raised.

A4 Building a Strong Economy Quarter 2 Performance Report

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy providing a performance update for the 2nd quarter of 2006/07 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the process of reporting future performance data be as outlined in paragraph 4 to the report.

A5 Towards a County Durham Economic Strategy

This item be deferred until the next meeting.

A6 DurhamNet

The Chairman introduced Alan Hodgson, the Chief Executive of Durham Net, and explained to the Committee about the project that had been undertaken in seeking to ensure that broadband services are available to all locations in County Durham.

Alan Hodgson gave a presentation which included his role, the background to DurhamNet, its infrastructure, funding, partnership, the wider region, accessibility within the county, and the future.

He explained that there is comprehensive infrastructure across county Durham and the wider region. DurhamNet provides internet and broadband services mainly to businesses. £6m has been spent on the infrastructure, and all schools in County Durham are connected to it which has enabled schools to make some significant savings. DurhamNet employs 35 people who will be moving to a new data centre at Tanfield which has massive potential for expansion.

He explained that all BT exchanges in County Durham are enabled for broadband however there are gaps in providing these broadband services between 2.5km and 3km. The way forward would be to use a wireless service and this can be undertaken through WiMax. Proposals are to be put to the sub regional partnership to see if they can get funding for this. If they are successful in securing the funding it would take approximately 2½ to 3 years until all of the county was covered.