

Building a Strong Economy Scrutiny Committee

8 September 2008



Progress Update Report: County Durham Economic Strategy (CDES), Action Plan and Economic Assessment

Report of John Richardson, Director of Environment Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides a progress update on the County Durham Economic Strategy (CDES) 2008-2013 along with a forward plan for the implementation of the CDES, Action Plan and Economic Assessment.

Background

- 2 The draft County Durham Economic Strategy (CDES), replacing the previous strategy, was published for public consultation over a 12 week running until March 2008. This is in accordance with Government guidelines.

The key proposals contained in the CDES seek to tackle the effects of the decline in traditional industries and to reduce inequalities in access to learning, skills and employment. In addition, the CDES will seek to create a more prosperous County where businesses are creating more, high quality jobs for local people and where County Durham residents can access training and well paid employment opportunities.

Update on CDES

- 3 Following the formal consultation period including the production of a 'Report on Consultation, amendments were made to the draft strategy. At the Board meeting of the County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP) on 21st July 2008, agreement was reached on the contents and key principles of the County Durham Economic Strategy (CDES). This however is subject to final comments being received from key CDEP stakeholders and the cabinet of Durham County Council, and amendments being made to reflect any such comments.

Consultation with key stakeholders is now complete with a number of minor alterations being proposed: a total of nine stakeholders made written comments. These are now being analysed and considered for inclusion in the final draft. This process is being supported by the consultancy expertise of Shared Intelligence.

The target date for completion of the rewriting and reformatting of the revised draft of the CDES is the 22nd September 2008. The Chair of the CDEP, on behalf of the Partnership, will agree the contents of the strategy by 26th September 2008, subject to no further alterations being required.

It is proposed a 'Members Seminar' will be held for all elected members later in early October, which will seek to inform the CDES. The target date for presentation of the final draft to Cabinet is the 23rd October 2008. If this is not practical, then the final draft will go to the next available Cabinet.

Update on CDES Action Plan

- 4 Running in parallel with the production of the CDES is the development of the associated Action Plan. The Action Plan will develop the core themes of the CDES; establishing actions for implementation, resource requirements, and roles and responsibilities.

Once the CDES is finalised, the draft Action Plan will then be revised and published, subject to approval from Cabinet. The Action Plan will be implemented by the CDEP and used to inform the County Durham Economic Assessment.

County Durham Economic Assessment

- 5 The 2007 "Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration" (CLG, HMT, BERR), commonly referred to as SNR, proposed a statutory economic development duty for local authorities including the production of an Economic Assessment (EA).

The EA will utilise much of the evidence which underpins the emerging CDES and Action Plan, and will be used to inform the action of bodies involved in economic development and regeneration. In particular, the EA will inform the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) and 'place shaping' at local and sub-regional levels.

With this in mind, One NorthEast, North East Assembly, each North East sub-region and many of the regions local authorities are committed to producing an Economic Assessment prior to the statutory duty likely to be in place by 2010.

Preliminary work has begun on producing an Economic Assessment for County Durham and an officer steering group has been established to guide the process. Indicative timescales suggest that preliminary findings will be ready early in 2009.

It is worth stressing that the Economic Assessment is not conceived as one-off process. Rather, it will be incrementally updated to reflect changing economic circumstances and political priorities.

Recommendations and reasons

6. The report is for information and requires no actions at present from the Building a Strong Economy Scrutiny Committee.

