

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**At a Meeting** of the **Building a Strong Economy Scrutiny Committee** held at County Hall, Durham on **Monday 1 December 2008** at **10.00 a.m.**

**Present:**

**Councillor J Moran** in the Chair

**Members:**

Councillors Armstrong, Arthur, Graham, B Harrison, Jopling, Liddle, Sloan and Stradling.

**Other Member:**

Councillors Simmons and Southwell

**Co-opted Members:**

Mr B Walker and Mrs O Brown

**A1 Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Building a Strong Economy Scrutiny Committee.

**A2 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to Councillor Willis being shown as in attendance (for copy see file of Minutes)

Councillor Moran referred to the forthcoming visits which had been arranged to Jobcentre Plus, on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December, and urged those members who were unable to attend on the 9<sup>th</sup> to make every effort to attend on 19<sup>th</sup>.

Councillor Armstrong welcomed Brian Walker to his first meeting of the Committee as a Co-opted Member.

Referring to Minute A5, Diane Barrow informed the Committee that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and herself had attended the Annual Tourist Board

meeting on 16 October. The County Durham Tourism Partnership (CDTP) had changed its priorities, and it was intended to invite the Chief Executive of the CDTP to the March 2009 meeting of the Committee to provide an update.

Other items in the Minutes were to be dealt with under items on the agenda.

### **A3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **A4 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

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

### **A5 An Overview of County Durham Development Company Activities 2007-2008**

The Committee received a presentation from Stewart Watkins, Managing Director of County Durham Development Company which gave details of CDDC activities during 2007-2008 (for copy of slides see file of Minutes)

The presentation was the same as that given to the CDDC Board of Directors at their Annual General Meeting. The Chairman thanked Stewart for his interesting and informative presentation.

### **A6 Economic Development and Regeneration Update**

The Committee noted a report of the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration which provided an update on the following three key issues concerning Economic Development and regeneration in County Durham (for copy see file of Minutes)

#### **Transforming Places; Changing Lives, a framework for regeneration**

The County Council's response to the Government consultation document had been made 5-6 weeks ago, and a copy of the response was attached to the report for Members information

#### **County Durham Economic Strategy 2008-2013**

The County Durham Economic Strategy had been fully endorsed by both the Full Council and by the County Durham Economic Partnership Board.

#### **County Durham Economic Strategy Action Plan**

A consultation process was underway with the working groups of the Economic Partnership and key stakeholders to create an Action Plan. The consultation process would look at each priority in the Economic Strategy and

identify the spatial priorities for intervention, timescales and the lead partners who would deliver this.

#### **A6 Progress Update Report: County Durham Economic Partnership update on the Skills Summit and Governance Arrangements for Skills and Employment**

The Committee noted a report of the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration which provided a progress update on the County Durham Economic Partnership's Skills Summit event and review of governance arrangements for skills and employability, along with changes to skills as a result of the economic downturn (for copy see file of Minutes)

In response to a question regarding apprenticeships, John Russell informed the Committee that apprenticeships were important for both young people and adults. The problem had been highlighted that employers did not always have vacancies, and New College were looking to provide tailored apprenticeship packages. Lee Pugalis added that this could be one area that the new Authority could lead by example through the creation of apprenticeship schemes. Tom Bolton informed the Committee that apprenticeships had been the subject of an Overview and Scrutiny Project some 2 to 3 years ago which had recommended the creation of more modern apprenticeship schemes within the Council.

#### **A7 Update in relation to work undertaken in collaboration with JobCentre Plus**

The Committee noted a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny which provided an update in relation to work undertaken in collaboration with JobCentre Plus and outlined how the Committee would work in partnership with JobCentre Plus in the future (for copy see file of Minutes)

Diane barrow informed the Committee that the response of the Authority to the consultation document "No-one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility" had been considered by Cabinet on 9 October 2008, following contributions of members of the Committee.

Two visits had been arranged to a JobCentre Plus facility for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008 to allow Members the opportunity to see a modern JobCentre in action and to speak to staff about the changes in the benefit system in the consultation paper. Following the visits, it was intended to arrange a seminar fro Members early in the New Year.