

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

At a Special Meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee** held at County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 15 January 2009** at **10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor J Armstrong in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Alderson, Avery, J Bailey, Blakey, Boyes, Burnip, Brunskill, Campbell, Chaplow, Hopgood, D Maddison, Martin, Moran, Murphy, D Myers, B Ord, C Potts, D Southwell, Stoker, Stradling, Tennant, and K Thompson.

Other Members:

Councillors Farry, Freeman, Hancock, Hugill, G Huntington, Jopling, L Thomson, and Wilkes.

Faith Representative:

Mrs M Sands

Co-opted Members:

Mr B Birch, and Councillor B Howarth.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Arthur, Iveson, R Ord, and Revd K Phipps.

A1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A2 Items from Co-opted Members

There were no items from Co-opted Members.

A3 Area Action Partnerships- Draft Report for Consideration

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that would be presented to the Cabinet on 22 January 2009 regarding the Area Action Partnerships (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor B Stephens, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder, and Gordon Elliott, Head of Community Engagement and Partnerships presented the report.

The Committee agreed to share a number of issues to do with primarily governance arrangements accepting that this is the start of a developmental process and that we all need to make it work.

The key issues that came out of the discussion are to do with primarily the importance of good governance based on principles of openness and transparency. A number of issues were raised by Members and in summary these relate to:

- Getting the right membership for AAP`s; recruitment and selection procedures; tenure of office; responding to equality and diversity e.g. engaging young people in AAP`s; the need for political balance and geographical spread (getting the right people for the job);
- Responding to communities /delivering action through for example a small grants budget that can be used flexibly to do things;
- Using the core funding (150K) through opportunities to match fund with other AAP partners to respond jointly to local need; making sure projects are sustainable and not short term;
- Building communication and liaison links across AAP`s so that they learn from each other and pursue opportunities for collaborative work/projects;
- Set local priorities informed by the Council plan, partner priorities within the context of the SCS and LAA priorities; focus on local issues.

The detail is captured below :

Section 3- Proposed Geography for AAPs

- The Committee noted that not everyone was happy with the geographical boundaries but understood that this was the starting point, and these could be developed and changed overtime.

Section 4- Proposed Function of AAPs

- In order to promote community cohesion and support debate, it was important to have a Champion for equalities and diversity on the Boards. That person was not necessarily from a minority group, however would ensure that all voices were heard.

Section 5- Governance Model/ Terms of Reference

- Where there were more than six county councillors in an AAP area, each ward must have one elected member appointed onto the Board prior to the appointment of the remaining seat. It would be unfair for a ward area not to be represented.

- Members of the public- geographical representation should be a significant factor.
- The Political balance on a Board reflects the political representation of that area on the Unitary Authority.
- Ensure that there is a good representation of people on the Board that reflects the population of that area, and representation of young people on the Boards be sought.
- There was concern that there may be unfair influence on a Board by a particular section of the Board or community which leads to that influence being destructive. It was suggested that the Authority has mechanisms in place to ensure that this would be resolved.
- Where it was possible for one person to be on the Board of more than one AAP this be discouraged due to the workload issues.
- Appointment of members of public- it was noted that the terms of office were for four years, however to ensure that there would be continuity this be undertaken on a rolling basis. The suggestion being that initially some appointments be made for four years and some for two years, and that re-appointments be made for a four year period.
- Ensure that the rules around appointing substitutes be made clear.
- Parish councillors standing as members of public could create problems.
- If a member of the Board fails to attend meetings, instead of the Board or unitary authority making a decision whether to withdraw their membership, there be rules around attendance at meetings, and if they fail to attend a certain amount of meetings they automatically retire from the Board.
- The composition of each AAP be forwarded to each elected member in due course.

Section 6- Proposed Funding Models

- To ensure the funds of £150k go as far as possible, and in order to undertake schemes in partnership, as far as possible projects be undertaken where there is matched funding. It was accepted that there would be exceptions to this and did not want to discourage any schemes going forward. There was support for the proposed small grants scheme.
- In order to ensure that schemes within member budgets are not held up an elected member would be able to advise the Board in retrospect if they had determined that a scheme be commenced.
- To keep each AAP informed and in order to prevent duplication of projects where there are villages close together however in different AAP areas, a list

of the projects for consideration by each AAP be made available to their neighbouring AAP.

Section 7 Next Steps- Implementation and LSP Transition

- Set up an Overview and Scrutiny working group that will run parallel to the development of AAP`s. This working group will have a role in looking at how the AAP`s are developing, monitoring progress and making suggestions on how they may improve by talking with AAP`s and drawing on best practice and evidence of locality working locally, regionally and nationally.

Resolved:-

That the comments of the Committee be made to the Cabinet on 22 January 2009.