

PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 9 JANUARY 2007

REVIEW OF EAST DURHAM LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE – ALAN MILLER AND NORMAN MACKIE, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT NETWORK REPRESENTATIVES - COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE LSP

(i) What was the role of the Community Empowerment Network (CEN) within the LSP and its Sub Groups?

Mr Miller explained that the CEN saw their role as to articulate the views of the voluntary and community sector. Since the introduction of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund they had been involved in making decisions on how funding should be allocated. Mr Mackie explained that the perspective was around services and how services could be improved.

(ii) Where had the CEN been most effective so far within the LSP and its Sub Groups?

Mr Mackie explained that the CEN had influenced decisions the LSP had made, for example, training of youth workers. Groundwork East Durham were running a Youth Work Training Programme called the Hannen Project which engaged parents on the development of children at an early age. This was a Canadian idea which worked very well and funding had been received through the LSP. The CEN could influence how funding was spent by feeding their thoughts and ideas into the LSP.

Mr Miller explained that there was a gap in provision with regard to youth engagement. The Council had offered to put youth workers in place but this depended on other partners taking part.

(iii) Where had the Sub Group been least effective so far within the LSP and its Sub Groups?

Mr Mackie explained that the CEN had not been as effective in the Economy Sub Group. In the early days of the LSP, it had been difficult to get the Group up and running although it had improved. This Group was complex and there was a lot of information that needed to be digested by the CEN volunteer.

Mr Miller explained that there was a reluctance from the business sector to become involved and some meetings had been cancelled.

(IV) In the view of the CEN, was the LSP Sub Groups equally as effective in terms of structure and outcomes?

Mr Mackie explained that there were variations and some Sub Groups worked better than others. The Health Group was a model of good practice and always integrated CEN Members into it.

The Chair queried what it was about the Health Group that made it such a success. Mr Miller explained that the Health Group circulated all its papers in advance. One of the Sub Groups had cancelled meetings and not informed the CEN that they had been cancelled. There was communication problems with the members of the network from some of the Sub Groups.

(V) How did the CEN ensure that the work of the LSP and its Sub Groups were promoted within the community?

Mr Mackie explained that there were regular Executive meetings within the CEN that included representatives from across the District. The Members who represented the CEN on the Sub Groups fed back into the meeting and Officers from the LSP also attended. This was a very valuable area for exchanging information and was well attended with approximately 35-40 attendees. It was explained that there had been several promotional events, one had taken place in Peterlee Town Centre recently. The CEN were trying to promote as much as they could but you could never do enough. Areas that he wanted to develop were the website and newsletter.

(VI) How did the CEN ensure that the LSP focused on areas/issues which were of importance to the community of Easington?

Mr Mackie explained that feedback was achieved via Management meetings, Executive meetings and through their Outreach Workers. Their members were keen in what happened in their villages around them. Youth provision was always an area that was raised and the CEN had been approached by Easington Colliery and Hesleden to try to help them get a youth service established. The CEN was trying to pull together major stakeholders around youth provision although it must be done in partnership with District wide co-ordination. The majority of the main issues raised were around community safety and the environment.

Mr Miller explained that there needed to be more engagement with the youth. Successful youth work had been done by community groups. Young people had the same fears as the elderly ie the fear of crime.

(VII) Did the CEN have representatives from across the District thus ensuring that most villages were represented in the LSP discussions?

Mr Mackie explained that the CEN ran regular elections. A number of road shows had been held throughout the District to try to get the community involved and an electoral register of 200 people had been compiled. Two representatives from each Ward had been elected.

(VIII) How effective did you as Community Representatives feel that the LSP and its Sub Groups were communicating their achievements/non achievements?

Mr Mackie explained that the criticism of the CEN and the LSP was that communication could be better. There had been achievements but there needed to be some mechanism to communicate it to the public. There was some improvement but was an area for development.

(IX) What arrangements were in place within the Sub Group to report upon its activities and what were the reporting mechanisms from the Sub Group to the LSP?

Mr Mackie explained that the Chairs of the Sub Group reported to the LSP Executive and to the full LSP. Written reports from Officers were also considered at the LSP meeting.

Mr Miller explained that there were two representatives from the CEN on each of the Sub Groups who fed back to the wider Group so news could filter down. Real successes would be self promoting by word of mouth.

Transport was a problem and there were three different groups of organisations currently operating services to get people to hospital but it was not well publicised.

(X) How engaged do you consider the community of Easington to be in the shaping of the work of the LSP and do you feel the LSP objectives reflect those of the community?

Mr Mackie explained that this was done reasonably but felt that it could be improved. The CEN had a dialogue with the LSP a level which was removed slightly from the community and there needed to be a more intense dialogue at a community level. It was quite a large burden for two representatives to give the view of the whole community.

Mr Miller explained that the LSP had put £1.9 million into the new development Trust which showed their commitment.

(XI) Was there anything else that you would like to bring to the attention of the Committee which you feel should be considered as part of the ongoing review?

Mr Mackie explained that the CEN was in a process of transition with new Trust status with the combined CVS and CEN. The new Trust was in the early stages of development with staffing and structures being worked upon. This would be a one-stop shop for the community and voluntary sector in Easington District. The new Trust would be providing a variety of services and would have an impact on how the LSP worked in the future.

Mr Miller explained that he thought the new Trust would be a great success.

A Member queried if the CEN had been involved in the debate about local bus services and the low car ownership in the District. Mr Mackie explained that this was one of the issues that had been raised at the Management Group. There was a Transport Sub Group of the LSP which were currently looking at transport. They were putting together a package for better transport throughout the District.

A Member asked if the Chairs and Vice-Chairs met on a regular basis. Mr Mackie explained that the Chairs of the LSP Sub Groups met every month and fed back into the LSP and it was felt that they met regular enough.

The Chair referred to the Sub Groups and explained that there seemed to be some degrees of variation between how the Sub Groups worked. He referred to the Learning and Skills Sub Group and explained that the Chair had changed and asked for their opinion on how they felt Durham County Council's involvement was within the Group.

Mr Miller explained that there was not complete agreement about how the CEN saw things locally and the LEA perspective. There was no specific representative from the LEA who came to the LSP.

Mr Mackie explained that there were two strong CEN Representatives on the Learning and Skills Group who left the Group in no doubt as to where the gaps were. There needed to be a whole mix of educational Officers to make a meaningful decision on education. Patrick Conway did represent Durham County Council on the LSP and he presumed that all information was fed back to Durham County Council.

APPENDIX H

Mr Miller explained that representatives of the LSP felt that they did not always get answers to the questions that were being asked. The gap had been narrowing in GCSE results but not in the right subjects.

Mr Mackie commented that he had received excellent help from Officers of the District Council and the LSP.

The Chair thanked Mr Mackie and Mr Miller for their attendance.