

Item no

Report to: **Partnerships Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **3 April 2007**
Report of: **Scrutiny Support Manager**
Subject: **Scrutiny Review of East Durham Local Strategic Partnership**
Ward: **All**

1 **Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to highlight the findings of the Partnership Scrutiny Committee's review of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership.

2 **Consultation**

2.1 In preparing this report consultation has been undertaken with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, Management Team, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee and the LSP Manager.

3 **Background**

The Council has a statutory responsibility under the Local Government Act 2000 to produce a Community Strategy for the district in partnership with other local service providers and community representatives.

3.2 The Council does this by way of a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP is a non-statutory, non-executive organisation which operates at a level which enables strategic decisions to be taken and is close enough to individual neighbourhoods to allow actions to be taken at community level. Its purpose is to develop long-term strategies and plans for the local area and bring about effective change.

3.3 East Durham Local Strategic Partnership (EDLSP) is central to the Council's partnership working. It was established in 2002 and tackles key issues for local people such as crime, jobs, education, health, environment and housing. It is a key means of the Council fulfilling its statutory community leadership role.

3.4 The first Community Strategy 2003-10 brought together local and regional priorities for the first time in one document. It outlines the main actions needed if the District is to turn the challenges it faces into opportunities and improve the quality of life for everyone in East Durham. The Community Strategy is a key driver of the Council's Corporate Plan.

3.5 The EDLSP has been identified as a key partnership for the Council. It impacts upon all of the residents of the District and plays a key role in ensuring the social, economic and environmental regeneration of East Durham.

3.6 As such, the community planning process and Community Strategy needs to be understood widely within the Council and externally. Ownership of the process and strategy should also be widespread, ensuring that it is properly informed and effectively delivered.

3.7 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 11th July, 2006, agreed the following Terms of Reference for the review, namely:-

- To examine the role of East Durham LSP, its composition, accountability and scrutiny/governance arrangements
- To review the monetary value of the LSP and the risk management issues there from
- To review the delivery of the Community Strategy Targets and how these address the priorities of the community
- To analyse the methods of Community Engagement undertaken to influence the Community Strategy
- To identify how the partnership intends to develop its role, working arrangements and proposals for the future
- To examine the awareness within the community and the Council of the role and activities of the LSP and how these compare with awareness levels in other partner organisations.

4 **Position Statement and Options Appraisal**

4.1 Following adoption of the aforementioned Terms of Reference, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 1 August 2006, heard evidence from John Murphy, the Local Strategic Partnership Manager.

4.2 The Committee considered a report which detailed and explained the role of East Durham LSP, its composition, accountability and scrutiny/governance arrangements.

4.3 The Committee reviewed a range of documentary evidence, including:-

- East Durham Local Strategic Partnership Constitution

This detailed the LSP's Vision, Aims and Objectives, Powers and Membership. Explicit roles and responsibilities of the LSP Chair, Partner Organisations, the Chairs of the Implementation Sub Groups, the LSP Executive and the Strategic funding Group were also set out.

The Constitution also detailed the LSP's Code of Conduct and Standing Orders.

- Diagrammatic of the East Durham LSP structural arrangements.
- The Constitution of the East Durham LSP Strategic Funding Group.
- Protocol between the Easington Community Empowerment Network (CEN) and the East Durham LSP.

This explained the involvement of the CEN in the LSP and its Sub-Groups as well as identifying a Diversity and Equal Opportunities policy between the two organisations.

- East Durham Local Strategic Partnership - Performance Management Return for 2006.

This detailed the overall performance management assessment of the Local Strategic Partnership and its Implementation Groups awarded by Government Office North East.

The document also identified the Improvement Plans which were in place for each implementation group as well as the LSP's general partnership management process.

- 4.4 The Committee was advised of the decision-making structures within the LSP and in particular, the inter-relationships between the LSP, the LSP Executive, the six thematic sub-groups and the Strategic Funding Group.
- 4.5 Members were advised that the requirement of establishing the East Durham LSP was to make joint decisions as to how Neighbourhood Renewal Fund was used in order to narrow the gap which existed in respect of a number of key performance indicators between the most deprived wards within Easington and the more affluent areas.
- 4.6 As part of the LSP's performance management framework the thematic Sub-Groups were charged with drawing up interventions which sought to achieve the floor targets identified for that particular group as well as narrowing the gap in the other key target areas.
- 4.7 The Committee was advised that the LSP's six thematic groups monitored floor target areas covering
- crime
 - education
 - environment (liveability)
 - health
 - housing
 - worklessness (economy)
- 4.8 A number of these thematic groups were supported by sub-groups which existed to tackle specific issues.
- 4.9 The Strategic Funding Group scrutinised and monitored funding proposals drawn up in respect of the thematic groups. It also undertook risk assessments and the monitoring of interventions on behalf of the full LSP.
- 4.10 In order to ensure impartiality, the Chair of the SFG is independent of the Thematic Group Chairs and the LSP Executive.
- 4.11 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee then asked the LSP Manager a series of questions which were geared towards assessing how effective the LSP had been in addressing the issues identified in the Terms of Reference for the Review.

- 4.12 A copy of the questions and the LSP Manager's responses are attached to this report (Appendix A).
- 4.13 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee agreed at its meeting held on 1 August 2006 to interview the Chairs of the LSP's six thematic sub-groups.
- 4.14 In interviewing the six thematic sub-groups Chairs, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee agreed that it also consider the GONE Performance Assessment Reports and Improvement Plans relating to each group at the meetings.
- 4.15 Thereafter, interviews were conducted within the LSP thematic group Chairs as following:-

Date of Meeting	Sub-Group	Chair
19 September 2006	Crime	Steve Arkley (Vice Chair) District of Easington
10 October 2006	Education	Malcolm Fallow East Durham College
10 October 2006	Health	Anna Lynch Easington PCT
31 October 2006	Housing	Alan Caygill East Durham Homes
21 November 2006	Environment	Peter Richards Groundwork East Durham
	Worklessness	Richard Prisk District of Easington

- 4.16 A copy of the questions put to each Sub-Group Chair and the answer given are also appended to this report (Appendices B-G).
- 4.17 During a number of the Sub-Group Chair meetings, reference was made to the importance of the community's involvement within the Local Strategic Partnership. This led the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee investigation on to the specific Terms of Reference for the review relating to community priorities, community engagement and the awareness levels within the district's community of the role and activities of the Local Strategic Partnership.
- 4.18 Accordingly, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee interviewed representatives from the District of Easington Community Empowerment Network (CEN) at its meeting held on 9 January 2007.
- 4.19 A copy of the questions put to the CEN representatives and the answers given are appended to this report (Appendix H).
- 4.20 Whilst not forming part of the Review's original Terms of Reference, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee quickly identified linkages between the work of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnerships and also the newly established County Durham Local Area Agreement (LAA).

- 4.21 The Local White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" published in October 2006 identified linkages between the LSP and LAA. Local authorities are already under a duty to prepare a sustainable community strategy which is achieved in East Durham via the East Durham LSP. The White Paper now requires County and Unitary Local Authorities, in consultation with local partners, to prepare a delivery plan for these strategies known as a Local Area Agreement.
- 4.22 As a result, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee also decided to receive information from the Council's Assistant Chief Executive regarding the County Durham Local Area Agreement and how this fits with the work of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership.
- 4.23 Again, a copy of the questions put to the Assistant Chief Executive and the answers given are appended to this report (Appendix I).

5 **Review Findings**

- 5.1 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee Review of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership is well timed. The Government have consulted about the future shape of Local Strategic Partnerships and are looking at them becoming the "partnership of partnerships" in their area and that they move from a process focus to a delivery focus via Local Area Agreements.
- 5.2 The Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" further enhances the role of Local Strategic Partnerships in bringing together local partners to improve the services that citizen's receive and the local quality of life. Local authorities (County and Unitary local authorities) will be under a statutory duty to produce a Local Area Agreement which will include a single set of targets for improvement, tailored to local needs and agreed between Government and Local Partners.
- 5.3 The White Paper also introduces a duty for local authorities and local partners to work together to agree the priorities in the Local Area Agreement. Accordingly, the Local Strategic Partnership will be the main vehicle whereby this co-operation between local partners is realised and enhanced.
- 5.4 The review has sought views from a range of partners who engage with the Council via the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership. Consideration has also been given to GONE assessments of the LSP and its sub-groups in respect of performance and improvement planning initiatives.
- 5.5 From investigations the following summary and conclusions have been drawn which concentrate on the agreed Terms of Reference:-

5.6 **The Role of East Durham Local Strategic Partnership - Composition Accountability and Scrutiny/Governance Arrangements**

- 5.6.1 The East Durham LSP is composed of the full partnership, the LSP Executive, a Strategic Funding Group and six thematic sub-groups covering:-

- Community Safety Partnership
- Learning and Skills
- Environment
- Health
- Housing

- Economy

- 5.6.2 The LSP Executive's membership is the Leader of the Council who Chairs the Executive, the Chairs of the six thematic sub-groups, six members of the Community Empowerment Network (one from each sub-group) and the Chair of the East Durham Business Forum.
- 5.6.3 Many of the decisions are taken for the LSP by the LSP Executive which meets every two months, although these need to be ratified by the full LSP unless acting under delegated powers.
- 5.6.4 The full LSP has a core voting membership of 29 different organisations covering the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. It meets four times a year and has an invitation list covering 70 people.
- 5.6.5 The Strategic Funding Group undertakes the risk assessment and monitoring of interventions on behalf of the LSP. The Group formally oversees the strategic funding issues identified by the LSP and evaluates and initiates projects for inclusion in the SRB, European and other programmes.
- 5.6.6 As referenced in section 4.3 of the report, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has reviewed detailed Terms of Reference for the LSP, the LSP Executive, its sub-groups and the Strategic Funding Group. Structure charts and various lines of accountability and operational protocols have also been examined and the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee consider them to be sound and robust.
- 5.6.7 The Governance arrangements **within** the LSP have also been examined by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee with the Constitution, Codes of Conduct, Standing Orders and Protocol between the LSP and the Easington Community Empowerment Network (CEN) also receiving attention.
- 5.6.8 The thematic sub-groups of the LSP are formed to draw up interventions to achieve the various floor targets identified for that particular group as well as narrowing the gap in other key target areas. The groups also use the LSP's agreed performance management systems to assess the effectiveness of the interventions in meeting floor targets.
- 5.6.9 The Chairs of the LSP Sub-Groups are required to report upon their progress to the LSP Executive every two months.
- 5.6.10 The East Durham LSP is subject to external scrutiny and assessment by Government Office North East (GONE). The LSP and its thematic sub-groups are self-assessed following a "traffic light" methodology with green being the best and red being the worst. GONE then carry out an annual review which includes all parties. The areas of partnership management and improvement planning are also assessed.
- 5.6.11 The assessments for 2006 were as follows:-
- Crime - Green
 - Education - Amber/Green
 - Environment (Liveability) - Amber/Green
 - Health - Amber/Green
 - Housing - Amber/Red
 - Workless (Economy) - Amber/Green

- Overall Assessment of East Durham LSP - Amber/Green
- Partnership Management - Amber Green
- Improvement Planning - Amber/Green

5.6.12 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considers that the performance management arrangements generally operate well within the East Durham LSP and its sub-groups although there is variation in respect of how LSP Sub-Groups set their annual targets.

5.6.13 However, the assessment in relation to housing highlights areas of concern in respect of addressing the number of local authority dwellings which fail to meet decent homes standards.

5.6.14 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has also received evidence which suggests that District Council officer support is widespread throughout all of the LSP Groups and that this support is apparent at both strategic and operational level.

5.6.15 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has also been advised that whilst the LSP Sub-Groups appear to be equally as effective in terms of structure, there were differences between the groups in setting targets within the Performance Management Framework. Furthermore, sub-group representatives had expressed a degree of concern that meetings of some sub groups were either cancelled at short notice or that reports were not readily available. In the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee's view it is essential that the timing of meetings is scheduled in advance at the start of the financial year and that sub-group chairs commit to the publication of reports and supporting information in advance of these meetings.

5.6.16 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee is pleased that the District Council of Easington's Executive Members are key players in both the full local Strategic Partnership and the LSP Sub-Groups. This demonstrates the commitment of the Council to the LSP to both partner organisations and the community and voluntary sector.

5.6.17 One issue of concern has been raised in respect of the Scrutiny of the Local Strategic Partnership and how the Council satisfies itself that the LSP is meeting its performance targets and ultimately how it delivers against those priority areas within the Community Strategy.

5.6.18 Consideration needs to be given as to whether there is a need for the Council to introduce formal arrangements for Scrutiny of the East Durham LSP and whether this rests with the District Council's Executive Members who attend the LSP and its sub-groups or one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees. This issue is picked up further on in this report.

5.7 **The Review of the Monetary Value of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership and Associated Risk Management Issues**

5.7.1 Whilst this issue was agreed as part of the Terms of Reference of the review, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee recognised at an early stage that this issue could prolong the review to such an extent that it became unmanageable.

5.7.2 As a result, it was agreed that the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee satisfy itself with ensuring that the LSP was spending the resources it had allocated

to it and also that the governance arrangements within the LSP for allocating funding to projects and ensuring that all partners had an opportunity to input into the funding regime.

5.7.3 In respect of NRF spend, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee was pleased to note that the NRF allocation for the East Durham LSP for 2004-6 was 100% spent with a value of £13.1m. Government Office for North East has recognised that the LSP has consistently demonstrated in the last three years its ability to ensure spend.

5.7.4 It is also noted that the criteria under which NRF was awarded has been tightened to ensure that NRF was being used to support main priorities and activities of service providers rather than peripheral priorities.

5.7.5 In respect of the risk management issues associated with resource allocation and interventions, this is undertaken by the Strategic Funding Group. Having considered the Terms of Reference of the Strategic Funding Group, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee is satisfied that adequate risk management controls are evident within the LSP's existing arrangements.

5.7.6 One issue that has been picked up by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee during its deliberations related to the Government decision to pool NRF resources in 2007 and beyond and link its usage with the County Durham Local Area Agreement. Clear risks have been identified with this proposal that those existing 'deprived' areas currently in respect of NRF resources (Derwentside, Easington, Sedgefield and Wear Valley) may lose out to other districts under the pooling arrangements. The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee is concerned that these proposals would have major implications for the most deprived wards in the Easington District and would recommend that the Easington representatives on the County Durham LAA ensure that the Council's position in this matter is not compromised.

5.8 **The Delivery of Community Strategy Targets and how these address community priorities**

5.8.1 The East Durham Local Strategic Partnership is charged with working out what the community wants and needs and where it is needed most and to develop a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and Community Plan to achieve this. The LSP provides a strong partnership vehicle to achieve this. The LSP provides a strong partnership vehicle to achieve the outcomes identified within the Community Strategy. As identified earlier in this report, each individual theme is the sole or joint responsibility of the six thematic implementation groups.

5.8.2 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has examined the delivery plan process for the Community Strategy and is confident that the process is robust and, most importantly, has been developed by gathering the views of local people.

5.8.3 The Strategy is reviewed on an annual basis to measure progress and to ensure that the community knows what has changed in the neighbourhood as a result of the interventions that have been implemented.

5.8.4 The LSP ensures that the Community Strategy is a fluid document. Just as the original Community Strategy has been developed from issues brought forward from the 2001 Community Appraisals, further appraisals will be used

to ensure that the Community Strategy remains relevant in bridging the gaps between service provision and service users needs.

5.8.5 The Community Strategy framework also utilises a series of area frameworks whereby localised versions of the Community Strategy priorities are provided to assess how actions can contribute to those priorities.

5.8.6 This report has earlier identified the Performance Management Framework adopted by the East Durham LSP but that the use of performance management information was not always systematically demonstrated by sub-groups. This was attributed in part to the varying ability of sub-groups to access up-to-date performance management information.

5.8.7 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considered it essential that the Performance Management Framework and use of associated information in informing the success of interventions must be applied systematically in each area of the LSP's operations. Furthermore, LSP Partner Organisations are encouraged to provide the performance management data routinely and in a timely fashion.

5.9 **The methods of Community Engagement undertaken to influence the Community Strategy**

5.9.1 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has asked the Chair of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership, the LSP Manager and the Chair of each LSP Sub-Group Chair how the LSP ensures that the community is given the opportunity to influence the Community Strategy.

5.9.2 Without exception, each individual has cited the involvement of representatives of the Easington Community Empowerment Network as the main opportunity for the Community Strategy. Representatives of the CEN sit on each LSP body as full and equal partners and an agreed protocol has been formulated between the LSP and the CEN identifying the roles of the CEN and its member representatives.

5.9.3 It was noted that the CEN representatives acted as a conduit to ensure that there was a two-way flow of information between the CEN and its member organisations and the LSP.

5.9.4 Concerns had been expressed by the CEN representatives that they had not been as effective in the Economy Sub-Group due to the complex and technical detail to be absorbed from Economy Sub-Group reports.

5.9.5 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has been advised that the LSP had introduced a Communication Strategy for the enhancement of information dissemination at partner associations. However, concerns have been expressed that the communication strategy does not seem to have been embedded throughout the LSP and its sub-groups.

5.9.6 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee consider it essential that the LSP and, in particular, the Sub-Groups actively utilise the Communications strategy to ensure the effective publication of projects and interventions out of the community and to report periodically on the success or otherwise of such interventions in reducing the gaps in floor targets.

- 5.9.7 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee would recommend that the LSP agree to the use of Communications, Marketing and PR initiatives in improving its communication networks. In doing so LSP partners will need to consider who will take the lead for publicity arrangements.
- 5.9.8 Notwithstanding the above, the Council should ensure that it has effective arrangements in place for publicising the work and impact of the interventions in place.
- 5.9.9 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has also noted that a number of community events are held by some LSP sub groups on specific issues whereby the views of local residents are gathered on specific LSP initiatives. This should be systematic throughout the LSP.
- 5.9.10 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has received evidence regarding a variety of media utilised to advertise the East Durham Local Strategic Partnerships initiatives. These have included the Council's Infopoint magazine, the Council's website, the Local Strategic Partnership website, the Community Empowerment Network website, LSPTV and Easington District Council Community Kiosks.
- 5.9.11 Whilst the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee recognises the value of these methods of disseminating information, it is essential that they are effectively marketed by the LSP and their partners. Again this could be pursued by the LSP Communications Group.
- 5.10 **How does the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership intend to develop its role, working arrangements and proposals for the future?**
- 5.10.1 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has been advised that three specific areas had been reviewed during 2005/6 namely Worklessness, Education and Health. Two of these areas were reviewed to assess their case for remaining an LSP priority.
- 5.10.2 Further review has been undertaken following the publication of the "Every Child Matters" Report and the potential impact of the document on the Health Improvement and Learning and Skills Groups. The LSP will assess the structure of these two sub-groups and seek to integrate a local Children's Planning group within the LSP.
- 5.10.3 The Community Safety Partnership has reduced its number of task groups to follow the guidance of establishing itself as part of the National Intelligence Model. This will allow the group to be more flexible and responsive by meeting more often.
- 5.10.4 The LSP Transport Group has developed its role to encompass 'access to services' as it quickly realised that transportation was not the only barrier to obtaining services.
- 5.10.5 The Community Strategy is under review in light of the proposed Government Guidance which is anticipated to reflect the undermentioned 8 principles of a sustainable community, namely:-
- Active inclusive and safe - Fair tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities

- Well run - with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
- Environmentally sensitive - providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment
- Well designed and built - featuring quality built and natural environment
- Well connected - with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services
- Thriving - with a flourishing and diverse local economy
- Well served - with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people,s needs and accessible to all
- Fair for everyone - including those in other communities, now and in the future

5.10.6 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee welcomes this review clearly identifying the linkages with the Government's recent White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'. In reviewing the Community Strategy the LSP will look to reaffirm priorities that will not solely be about closing the gap in floor target areas.

5.10.7 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee is pleased to note the development and adoption by the LSP of an Equality and Diversity Policy. Equality and Diversity monitoring is built in to the LSPs existing attendance reports and the NRF funding returns. These detail the benefit that disadvantaged groups might receive as a result of LSP activities, including monitoring applications and decisions for funding.

5.10.8 Work will continue with East Durham Integration Forum, a fledgling organisation representing the views of faith and BME groups within the district. This group, when sufficiently developed, will be the representative group for faith and BME issues working in partnership with the Community Empowerment Network.

5.10.9 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee heard evidence during the review that LSP partners had seen their commitment to partnership working increase as a result of County Durham being accorded status as an LAA pilot. This, coupled with the fact that County Durham was a two-tier local government structure, meant that some partners had expressed a degree of difficulty in attending all of the LSP and sub group meetings with which they were involved. This was a particular problem for County-wide organisations such as the Learning and Skills Council and Durham Constabulary.

5.10.10 In view of this, Partnerships Scrutiny Committee suggests that it is essential that all partners commit to attending the LSP meetings and that they adhere to the requirements of the LSP's established Performance Management Framework in terms of reporting progress of interventions in addressing floor targets but also setting out future plans.

5.10.11 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has also heard evidence in respect of the potential integration of the work of the East Durham LSP and the County Durham Local Area Agreement. The Partnerships Committee notes that many

members of the LSP have supported the Local Area Agreement and have been actively involved in supporting and leading working groups across the floor LAA blocks.

- 5.10.12 The LSP has a dedicated place on the LAA Interim Board and will form part of the governance arrangements overseeing delivery of the LAA. It is pleasing that the LSP is represented across all four blocks of the LAA.
- 5.10.13 Reference has previously been made to discussions that have taken place in anticipation of NRF being pooled for 2007. In view of this, there is a potential impact upon outcomes and individual LSP targets and a corresponding impact on the LAA targets.
- 5.10.14 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has been advised that a direct result of the LSP working within the LAA has seen the successful application for Local Enterprise Growth Initiative status via a combined bid from Derwentside, Easington, Sedgfield and Wear Valley which will bring in over £10m over the next four years.
- 5.10.15 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considers it essential that the East Durham LSP undertakes a monitoring role to assess the impact of the LAA upon the localities within East Durham.
- 5.10.16 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has heard evidence that the Local Government White Paper refers to an enhanced role for scrutiny in respect of the relationships between Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements and local councils.
- 5.10.17 This Review represents the first formal monitoring of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership and it has become evident during the review that whilst the LSP is scrutinised externally by GONE and will continue to be monitored through the LAA, there are no formalised arrangements for the Council scrutinising LSP performance. This should be addressed.
- 5.10.18 Given the potential formalisation of linkages between the LSP and the LAA, it follows that there should also be an element of political scrutiny of the LAA also.
- 5.10.19 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considers that the East Durham LSP and the County Durham LAA should be required to report to the Council upon the relative progress made by both in addressing the social and economical levels of deprivation within East Durham and the success of associated interventions.

5.11 **The level of awareness within the community of East Durham and District of Easington Council of the role and activities of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership**

- 5.11.1 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee found that many of the issues raised in respect of methods of community engagement were equally as applicable in terms of gauging the level of awareness within the community of East Durham and District of Easington of the activities of the LSP.
- 5.11.2 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee was concerned that there appeared to be no formal reporting mechanisms for LSP activity outside of the LSP

structure itself. Issues have been raised in this respect regarding how the Council is formally kept informed of the activities of the LSP.

- 5.11.3 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee was also concerned that, whilst employees of the District Council may be aware of the existence of East Durham LSP, they would not know exactly what its purpose and activities were.
- 5.11.4 These concerns were also applicable to awareness amongst Councillors of the LSP. It was generally considered that only those Councillors who were directly involved with the LSP would have an awareness of the role and activities of the LSP and its sub groups.
- 5.11.5 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee might consider that, in requiring the LSP to introduce formal reporting mechanisms to the Council, levels of awareness will be improved. Furthermore, if the Council's Scrutiny Committees were given enhanced powers as suggested in the local Government White Paper to scrutinise the LSP, again member awareness and levels of accountability would be enhanced.
- 5.11.6 Almost all of the LSP representatives who provided evidence to the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee regarding community engagement and raising awareness levels amongst the community made reference to the Community Empowerment Network as being the key mechanism for achieving this.
- 5.11.7 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, whilst initially having concerns that the input of the Easington Community into the LSP may be vested in a small number of Community volunteers, considers that evidence has shown that the CEN is vitally important to the success of the LSP and has its own internal mechanisms for disseminating information to the wider community.
- 5.11.8 Reference has also been made to the lack of co-ordinated Communications to publicise the activities of the LSP and its sub-groups. Whilst a communications group exists within the LSP, its use by sub group chairs and the LSP generally appears limited. This must change if the public at large is to view the LSP as a fully functional entity working as a collaboration of partners to improve the quality of life and services in East Durham.
- 5.11.9 Further development work is also recommended by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in respect of the various media channels which are available to publicise the LSP. The websites of both the Local Strategic Partnership and the County Empowerment Network could be enhanced to provide up to date information on their activities. In this respect, it is acknowledged that the existing content of these websites can only be as good as the raw data provided to the LSP support staff who are responsible for populating the websites and maintaining them. This should be an area of training and development for both the LSP partners and the Community Empowerment Network.
- 5.11.10 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has been made aware by some sub-group Chairs that specific stakeholder events have been arranged to promote awareness of initiatives within the community. This was particularly clear in the evidence provided by the Community Safety Partnership, Health Improvement Group and the Economy Sub Group. This practice should be congratulated and rolled out across all LSP sub groups.

- 5.11.11 Indeed, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee would recommend to the LSP to give consideration to at least an annual stakeholder event be promoted within East Durham to showcase the achievements of the LSP, the interventions that have been introduced and the impact that these have had in making East Durham a better place to live, work and play.
- 5.11.12 The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has also given consideration to the awareness levels existing amongst Councillors, Council employees and the East Durham community of the County Durham Local Area Agreement. Again, whilst Councillors, Council employees and the community might know that the County Durham LAA existed, awareness of what it entailed and the proposed outcomes that should be delivered as part of the LAA mechanism may not be evident.
- 5.11.13 Evidence was provided by the Council's Assistant Chief Executive on this matter where it was acknowledged that the main thrust of work had been to formally establish the LAA framework and the associated governance arrangements.
- 5.11.14 Referring to the potential linkages between the LAA and the LSP, the Assistant Chief Executive indicated that training sessions were to be held with LSP members. It is acknowledged that a great deal of work has already been undertaken to broaden the awareness levels amongst Councillors and Staff regarding the work of the LSP and the LAA.
- 5.11.15 Notwithstanding this, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee would recommend further briefing sessions being arranged periodically for Councillors and Council staff together with the production of regular newsletters or articles in existing Council publications outlining the role of the County Durham Local Area Agreement.

6.0 **Implications**

6.1 Financial

6.1.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.2 Legal Implications

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.3 Policy Implications

6.3.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

6.4 Risk Implications

6.4.1 A Risk Assessment has been carried out and actions to address risks outside the Council's corporate risk appetite have been agreed.

6.5 Communications Implications

6.5.1 The report and its findings will be published and the Marketing and Communications Unit will be consulted to produce an appropriate press release.

6.5.2 It is also suggested that the report be circulated to the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership identified within for information and comment.

7.0 **Corporate Implications**

7.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities

7.1.1 The review assesses the arrangements in place with the Local Strategic Partnership and the Council which aim to achieve Priority QS2 namely, "To develop our community leadership and engagement role and to develop partnerships under the auspices of the LSP".

7.2 Equality and Diversity Implications

7.2.1 There are no Equality and Diversity Implications arising from this report.

7.3 E-Government Implications

7.3.1 There are no E-Government Implications arising from this report.

7.4 Procurement Implications

7.4.1 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

7.5 Performance Management and Scrutiny Implications

7.5.1 The review has examined the performance management arrangements which exist within the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership.

7.5.2 The review was identified as a priority issue with the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee's work programme for 2006/7.

8.0 **Recommendations**

8.1 Members are invited to receive this report, agree its content and to approve the following recommendations arising from the report:-

In respect of the Role of East Durham LSP, its composition, accountability and Scrutiny/Governance Arrangements

- (1) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considers the structure and composition of the East Durham LSP to be robust with clear lines of accountability and operational protocol evident.
- (2) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee notes the improved performance of the LSP, its Sub Groups, Partnership Management and Improving Planning.
- (3) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considers it essential that the timing of LSP, Executive and Sub-Group meetings is scheduled in advance and that, in particular, **all** sub group Chairs commit to the publication of reports and supporting information in advance of these meetings.

- (4) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee welcomes the support provided by District of Easington Council officers to the LSP and its Sub Groups and reaffirms that District Council of Easington's Executive members are key players in the LSP and its sub-groups.
- (5) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, whilst acknowledging the role of GONE in scrutinising the performance of the LSP, considers that formal arrangements for scrutinising the LSP performance by the Council be implemented within its political management arrangements for accountability.

Regarding the Monetary Value of the LSP and associated Risk Management issues

- (6) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee applauds the LSP regarding its NRF spend, recognising that it has consistently demonstrated its ability to ensure 100% of NRF spend for the last three financial years.
- (7) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee notes the role of the LSP's Strategic Funding Group in ensuring that adequate risk management controls are in place in respect of resource allocation and interventions.
- (8) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee notes the potential pooling of NRF funding from 2007 under the County Durham Local Area Agreement and would recommend that Easington representatives on the County Durham LAA ensure that those words within Easington are not adversely affected by this proposal.

In respect of Community Strategy targets and how these address community priorities

- (9) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considers the LSP's Community Strategy delivery plan process to be robust and, importantly has been developed by gathering the views of the East Durham Community.
- (10) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee notes that the Performance Management Framework adopted by the LSP and the use of performance information is not routinely evident in all of the LSP Sub Groups. The LSP must ensure that this is rectified and that LSP partners must commit to provide performance data routinely and in a timely fashion.

In respect of Community Engagement undertaken to influence the Community Strategy

- (11) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee welcomes the involvement of the Community Empowerment Network within the East Durham LSP and its sub-groups and endorses the CEN's role as the principle mechanism for ensuring community involvement within the LSP.
- (12) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee recommends that the LSP further develop the role of its Communications group to ensure the effective publication of projects and interventions to the Community.

- (13) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee recommends that the use of media such as the LSP Website, individual partner websites, the Council's Infopoint Publication, LSPTV and District Council Community Kiosks be actively marketed by the LSP to publicise its activities.

In respect of the LSP developing its role, working arrangements and proposals for the future

- (14) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee notes and welcome the proposals detailed in Section 5.10 for the review of its internal arrangements to reflect key policy and strategic developments which impact on its structures.
- (15) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee endorses the proposals for reviewing the Community Strategy in light of government guidance identified in Section 5.10.5 of the report.
- (16) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee welcomes the development of an Equality and Diversity Strategy by East Durham LSP and considers it essential that the views of minority groups are represented within the LSP and its decision making structures.
- (17) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee welcomes the potential for integration of the role of the East Durham LSP and the County Durham Local Area Agreement but would also recommend that the LSP seek to formalise a monitoring role to assess the impact of the LAA upon the localities in East Durham.
- (18) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee notes the references in the Governments White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' to an enhanced role for local government scrutiny in monitoring both LSPs and LAAs. The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee would recommend that both the LSP and LAA consider introducing formalised arrangements for the periodic scrutiny of their activities.
- (19) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee recommends that the East Durham LSP and County Durham LAA be required to report to the Council upon progress in addressing the levels of socio-economic deprivation within East Durham and the success of associated interventions.

In respect of the levels of awareness within the Community of East Durham and District of Easington Council of the role and activities of the East Durham LSP

- (20) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee would reiterate recommendations 12, 13, 18 and 19 in being critical to improving the levels of awareness in both East Durham and District of Easington Council of the activities of East Durham LSP.
- (21) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee notes the success of the Community Safety Partnership, the Health Improvement Group and the Economy Sub Group in using stakeholder events to promote their

activities to with the Community, and recommends that this be rolled out amongst other LSP sub-groups.

- (22) the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee recommends that the LSP consider holding an annual stakeholder event to showcase the achievements of the LSP, the interventions that have been introduced and the impact that these have had for the benefit of the residents of East Durham.

8.2 In the event that the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee agrees to the aforementioned recommendations, it is further recommended that this report be referred to the Executive for consideration.

Background Papers

- 1 Report of Scrutiny Support Manager to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee – 11 July 2006
- 2 Report of the LSP Manager to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee – 1 August 2006
- 3 Minutes of Partnerships Scrutiny Committee Meetings – 19 September, 10 October, 31 October and 21 November 2006, 9 January 2007 and 30 January 2007
- 4 East Durham LSP Website
- 5 East Durham LSP Performance Management Framework 2006 Self Assessment
- 6 East Durham LSP Constitution
- 7 Protocol between East Durham LSP and District of Easington Community Empowerment Network
- 8 East Durham LSP – Strategic Funding Group Constitution