

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF CHESTER-LE-STREET

Report of the meeting of Partnership and Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel held in the Conference Room 3, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham, DH3 3UT on Tuesday, 11 March 2008 at 6.15 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor David Michael Holding (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Greatwich	J Shiell
P B Nathan	L Armstrong
M Sekowski	

Officers:

D Allinson (Democratic Services Assistant), N Cummings (Scrutiny Officer) and M Fell (Democratic Services Assistant)

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors M J Gollan and T J Smith.

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 6 DECEMBER 2007

RESOLVED: "That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting held 6 December 2007, copies of which had previously been circulated to each member, be confirmed as being a correct record, subject to the apologies for absence being amended to change Greatwich to S Greatwich.

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

45. MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING HELD 22 JANUARY 2008

RESOLVED: "That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Special Meeting held 22 January 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to each member, be confirmed as being a correct record, subject to the Democratic Services Assistant prompting a response from the Customer Services Manager in relation to a question asked by a member of the public at said meeting.

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

46. MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING HELD 12 FEBRUARY 2008

RESOLVED: "That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Special Meeting held 12 February 2008, copies of which had previously been circulated to each member, be confirmed as being a correct record, subject to Councillor L Armstrong's name being included on the list of Apologies for Absence.

The Chairman proceeded to sign the minutes.

47. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

There were no declarations of interest received from Members.

48. PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chairman acknowledged the three members of the public in attendance and advised that he would invite them to speak at the appropriate times during the meeting.

49. DRAFT REPORT OF THE REVIEW TO ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TO THE COUNCIL, ITS PARTNERS AND THE COMMUNITY.

The Chairman invited comments in relation to the Draft Report of the Review to assess the effectiveness of Community Partnerships to the Council, its partners and the community and advised the Members that himself and the Vice Chairman had viewed the report prior to the meeting and submitted their comments, which had been taken into consideration.

The Chairman advised the Members to give serious consideration to the draft recommendations and to scrutinise any areas of the report, which may need to be strengthened.

The members proceeded to go through the report and were given the opportunity to raise queries and make comments, which were discussed by all who were present.

Councillor Nathan requested clarification in relation to the purpose of the report and whether it was to scrutinise all the District Partnerships or just the areas that were currently working.

Councillor Greatwich commented that the report was a view of how the entire Districts' Partnerships were working at the present time and the Members agreed that the report should detail all the difficulties experienced throughout the District.

The Chair queried whether the report provided enough detail about the future of District Partnerships with special consideration given to Local Government Review and it was suggested that the Scrutiny Officer amend the report to provide more detail on this and also the future of the Partnerships that had failed.

Discussion ensued in relation to Section 3, 'the purpose of the review' and Section 6, 'the aim of the review' and whether one could be subsumed in to the other. Councillor Armstrong agreed and commented that the 'aim of the review' was included in the 'terms of reference' section.

The Chairman suggested that the Scrutiny Officer amend the report so that paragraph 6.1 be combined with paragraph 3.1, enabling Section 6 to be removed from the report.

The Chairman took the opportunity to advise the panel that a White Paper had recently been published on Community Engagement and suggested that the Scrutiny Officer may want to look in to it, in terms of the report.

The Scrutiny Officer agreed to research in to the White Paper and refer to his findings at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting, the following week.

Discussion resumed at Section 9 of the report, and in particular paragraph 9.3 where Councillor Nathan queried whether the figure shown for the attendance at Lumley was an average for their first meeting or for the year. The Chairman queried the origins of the figures in the report and whether they could be checked for accuracy.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the Panel that the Community Strategy Adviser provided the figures and he would enquire as to whether they were an average for the year or the first meeting.

Discussion ensued in relation to paragraph 9.14 and the main points from the meeting with the Community Development Manager and the Community Engagement Officer, with particular reference being made to Chester-le-Street not having qualified for any Neighbourhood Renewal or Community Empowerment Funding.

The Discussion moved forward to paragraph 9.22 and the main points from the interview with Belinda Lewis, of Chester-le-Street Council Voluntary Services (CVS). Councillor Nathan queried the fourth bullet point and the reason why public interest could not be sustained for long periods. The Chairman advised the Panel that in paragraph 9.24, the LSP Steering Group questionnaire responses discussed the reasons why the public were often reluctant to engage in community partnerships.

The Chairman queried the sixth bullet point, in paragraph 9.24 and whether it should be retained in the main body of the report or just referred to in the appendices. The Chairman suggested that the bullet point be re-worded as a means of keeping it in the main body of the report.

The Chairman advised the Panel that during the review he felt they had omitted to establish what other County Durham Districts do in relation to Community Partnerships, as a way of a comparison for the area. The Scrutiny Officer informed the panel that during the review they had spoken to the

Community Strategy Adviser in relation to Community Engagement at a County wide level but they had been unable to gain any information. The Chairman suggested that the Scrutiny Officer look in to establishing what the Districts' do.

The Chair commented in relation to paragraph 10.8 and the unitary proposal of the formation of Area Action Partnerships. He advised that this might not go ahead in its intended form following the May elections.

Councillor Sekowski commented that the new Council would need to develop some form of area-based structures for the community. He suggested that the term 'Area Action Partnership' was too generalised.

A member of the public commented that paragraphs 10.7 and 10.8 had read that the partnerships would be county based rather than local and that these would be the focus for people to put their own voice across.

The Chairman advised that Member Area Panels were in existence at County level and were not currently presented as being public meetings. He commented that these structures needed to be built on and that this should be included in the Panels' recommendations.

Councillor Nathan left the Meeting at 7.45pm.

The Panel proceeded to discuss the recommendations of the report and made changes where appropriate.

RESOLVED: "That the recommendations be amended as agreed in the Meeting prior to being submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board."

50. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING.

RESOLVED: "That the next Meeting of the Panel be held on 22 April 2008 at 6.15pm."

The meeting terminated at 8.00 pm