

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

21 October 2013



Update on Members' Reference Group – Implications of changes in Government funding on the economy of County Durham

Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the progress of the Members' Reference Group looking at the implications of changes in Government funding on the economy of County Durham.

Background

- 2 Members will recall that at the meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 24 June 2013 during the consideration of the work programme reference was made to a Members' Reference Group which had been established in January, 2013 to look at the impact of changes in Government funding on the economy of County Durham. The Reference Group originally met on the 10 January 2013 where the decision was taken by members that any further meetings would be held following the May 2013 election when the membership of the Group would be refreshed.
- 3 Following the May election the group has had three meetings in June, July and October and it was therefore thought appropriate that the Committee should receive an update on the progress of the Members' Reference Group to date.

Member's Reference Group

- 4 The Reference Group was established as a result of members' concern at changes in policy and funding that was being introduced by Government and how that would impact upon the economy of County Durham. This had been highlighted as an area for inclusion in the 2012/13 work programme of the Committee.

- 5 In discussions with officers from the Regeneration and Economic Development (RED) Service Grouping in relation to the committee's work programme it was highlighted that officers within the Service Grouping had already started to pull together data looking at the impact of changes in Government funding on the economy of County Durham. This information would then be used by the Service Grouping to focus future service provision. It was suggested that in order to avoid duplication that a small group of members from the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee form a Members' Reference Group to work with officers from Regeneration and Economic Development.
- 6 The Reference Group has had three meetings to date in June, July and October. The first meeting on the 25 June 2013 consisted of an overview presentation, setting the scene for members providing information on the economic context, funding and investment examples, a suggested approach to analysing the impact and suggested next steps. In addition, the members agreed the Terms of Reference including key lines of inquiry and the Project Plan.
- 7 The second meeting held on the 18 July 2013 focused on the scale of the changes in Government funding, looking at the impact on a national basis and comparing to the impact in relation to County Durham including the impact of funding changes on the public sector (Durham County Council, Durham Constabulary and Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue). This session helped to identify gaps in resources looking at previous funding provision and comparing it to current levels of funding provision.
- 8 The third meeting of the Reference Group was held on the 16th October, 2013 and provided a summary of the following:
 - What had been affected? – Identification of various policy areas relating to the economy which have been affected by changes in Government funding.
 - Where within the County is most affected? – Assess the impact of changes in Government funding on the various communities within County Durham.
 - Who is most affected? – An overview identifying who has been the most affected.

Next Steps

- 9 A further three meetings of the Reference Group have been arranged which will focus on:
- Examining case studies providing examples of how changes in Government funding have impacted upon families, communities, businesses and the voluntary sector within County Durham.
 - An overview of the work currently undertaken by Durham County Council and partners to tackle the implications of changes in Government funding on the economy of County Durham including the work of the Area Action Partnerships and the County Durham Economic Partnership.
 - A summary of opportunities that may be available to assist in mitigating any negative impact of changes in Government funding such as new ways of working or any funding opportunities available.
 - An opportunity to undertake visits to see 'first hand' work currently being undertaken by Durham County Council and partners to tackle the implications of changes in Government funding on the economy of County Durham.
- 10 It is intended that the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive further progress updates on the work of the Reference Group at future meetings of the committee.

Recommendations

- 11 That the Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the information provided in the report.
- 12 That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to receive further progress updates in relation to the work of the Members' Reference Group.

Background Papers

- Members' Reference Group – Implications of Government funding changes on the economy of County Durham – Terms of Reference and Project Plan – meeting on the 25 June 2013.
- Presentations from the Members' Reference Group meetings held on the 25 June, 18 July and 16 October 2013.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – It is intended that the information considered by the Member's Reference Group and any resulting recommendations will be used by the Service Grouping to determine/target future provision including funding.

Staffing - None.

Risk - An Equality Impact Assessment may be required to be undertaken by the service carrying out the implementation of the recommendations.

Equality and Diversity – The report will identify the impact of changes in Government funding on various groups within County Durham. This information will be used to influence future provision.

Accommodation – None

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation - None

Procurement - None

Disability Discrimination Act - None

Legal Implications - None