

# Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

19 February 2014



## Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future - a review of Durham County Council's Area Action Partnerships – final update

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### Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

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#### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide to Members of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee a final update on progress of the recommendations of the scrutiny review of Area Action Partnerships – 'Fit for purpose, Fit for the future'.

#### Background

2. A key focus for Durham County Council is consulting and engaging effectively with local communities to ensure a focus on the needs of over 500,000 residents.
3. The 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) established in 2009 give people in Durham a greater voice in local affairs, enabling them to contribute to shaping services, and work directly with local partners to focus their actions and spending on issues important to their community.
4. In 2011, Overview and Scrutiny undertook a review of AAPs, to examine practices and processes, areas for improvement, whether they were "fit for purpose" and, in the context of the Government's Localism agenda and public sector funding reductions, "fit for the future."
5. Fourteen recommendations were agreed:
  - (i) a review of the AAP Terms of Reference be commenced to cover:
    - The inclusion of AAPs being non-political within the purpose and principles outlined within the AAP terms of reference;
    - The list of alternative public representatives drawn up at the initial appointment stage to be revisited as it is over 2 years old;
    - The rules regarding co-option and their application (currently co-optees have to stand down after 6 months but can be co-opted again formally);
    - The rules relating to the rotation of chairmanship of AAP Board amongst the three Board groups and their application;
    - The rules regarding speaking at AAP Board meetings and their application;
    - Clarification on the roles of the AAP Forum and Board meetings and which issues can be discussed at which meeting;

- The inclusion of information and guidance regarding “Conflicts of Interest” and the rules for declaring personal/prejudicial interests;
  - The production of robust terms of reference for task and finish groups to ensure that their activity is conducted within appropriate governance arrangements;
  - Where AAPs identify a need to alter their Terms of Reference, this should be done in compliance with the County Council’s Local Code of Corporate Governance.
- (ii) routine analysis of training needs and training to meet such development needs for both the board and staff should continue as this will enhance their effectiveness in the AAP;
- (iii) all Durham County Councillors be encouraged to engage with their local AAPs.
- (iv) Cabinet reaffirm the role of AAPs as a key mechanism through which the Council and partners will consult upon service and policy reviews; that service groupings, via the Consultation Officer Group ensure that such consultation is timely, appropriate and consistent across all AAPs.
- (v) where Town and Parish Councils are members of the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) appointments to AAP Boards should be made via CDALC. However, not all Town and Parish Councils are affiliated to CDALC and where this is the case in a particular AAP area then every effort should be made to ensure that those Town and Parish Councils have an equal opportunity to become involved with their respective AAP;
- (vi) the key actions identified within the internal review of AAP project funding (Section 5.78 of the main report refers) be implemented, particularly in respect of those areas of training and development identified.
- (vii) Cabinet in determining its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) take into consideration any financial allocation to the AAPs, the value that AAP Area Budget(AB) and Neighbourhood Budget(NB) have brought by way of matched funding opportunities namely, that each £1 of AB funding generates an average of £1.39 matched funding and each £1 of NB funding generates an average of £1.75 matched funding.
- (viii) AAPs look to develop the level of engagement and activity with the press and other media by:
- Actively engaging with Town and Parish Councils and utilising their publications to evidence and raise awareness of AAP activity.
  - Enhancing relationships between AAP Boards and Co-ordinators with local media.
  - Liaising with community groups/residents associations.
  - Including dedicated AAP pages within Durham County News.

- further enhancing AAP activity via new ways of working using the Internet, Facebook, Twitter and SMS Messaging.
- (ix) that the AAP project funding approval, appraisal process and application forms include a requirement that reports be submitted to AAP Boards on a quarterly basis detailing project progress.
  - (x) performance reports for AAP activity be shared with the wider AAP Forum membership and that the AAPs further develop the process of publication and reporting of the delivery of and impact made by AAP projects against local priorities. That the 14 AAPs come together in an annual conference to celebrate their achievements and successes in this respect.
  - (xi) AAPs undertake further work in conjunction with the ACE Planning and Performance team to enhance the reporting of performance management information and indicators.
  - (xii) the learning and evidence of good practice detailed within this review report be shared by AAP co-ordinators and their respective Chairs across all 14 AAPs and that bespoke improvement plans for each AAP be produced for example engagement with young people, options for broadening representation.
  - (xiii) the Council's Equalities and Diversity Team run a seminar with all 14 AAPs to develop an action plan to ensure that equality considerations are embedded in AAP practice and procedures evidencing the good practice that already exists.
  - (xiv) an initial response to these recommendation is brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board within six months; and that Cabinet agree to a review of the AAPs in another 2 years.
6. In relation to recommendation (xiv), a systematic update on the progress of the recommendations was provided to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2012 as part of the County Durham Partnership update report. However, following positive feedback from the Corporate Peer Challenge which also took place in July 2012, it was agreed that a further scrutiny review of AAPs would not be necessary.
  7. It was therefore decided that a final update on the recommendations of the scrutiny review would be provided to CIOSEC during 2013/14, hence this report. The final update on the recommendations can be found at Appendix 2. A copy of the summary report is also provided for information, at Appendix 3.

### **Corporate Peer Challenge**

8. The Corporate Peer Challenge was carried out in 2012, three years on from local government organisation (LGR), looking at various issues, including:
  - The council's approach to community engagement and partnership working. Strong connections and engagement with local communities was

a key priority for the new council and was a major feature of the LGR bid. There had been a strong focus on improvement in this area and in particular through the Area Action Partnerships.

9. The findings of the review were very positive towards Area Action Partnerships, comments included:
  - The AAPs are a powerful demonstration of the determination and ability of the new council to deliver a fresh approach to involving its communities.
  - The AAPs have moved rapidly from 'idea' to 'implementation', they have a strong focus on action and proportionate local partnerships.
  - They have a clear partnership governance structure.
  - Partner agencies are generally involved and supportive.
  - The peer team's broad conclusion is that AAPs are sound, valued and have exceeded early expectations.
  
10. Further information is available in the report that was presented to Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2012 (available on the county council website).

## **Recommendations**

11. Members are requested to:
  - a. Note the information in this report;
  - b. Note the progress made on the recommendations of the overview and scrutiny review of AAPS 'Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future', attached at appendix 2;
  - c. Agree that this is the final update relating to those recommendations.

**Background papers:** Overview and Scrutiny review of AAPs 'Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future'; Corporate Peer Review, July 2012

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance - None**

**Staffing - None**

**Risk - None**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None**

**Accommodation - None**

**Crime and Disorder - None**

**Human Rights - None**

**Consultation – None**

**Procurement - None**

**Disability Issues - None**

**Legal Implications - None**