

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



6 March 2017

Review of the County Durham Environment Awards

Joint report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships and Ian Thompson, Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the development, progress and current processes of the County Durham Environment Awards with a view to continuing to strengthen community, partner and Member engagement in delivery. The report will be supplemented by a visual presentation to the Committee.

Background

- 2 The County Durham Environment Awards (referred to as 'the Awards') were established in 1989 and initially focussed on the built and natural environment. Their overarching objective is to reward great design, environmental guardianship and community spirit in County Durham. Until Local Government Review they were delivered solely by Durham County Council. Subsequently, responsibility for the strategic development of the Awards has rested with the County Durham Environment Partnership with day to day management provided by DCC staff.
- 3 The remit of the Awards has continued to develop to reflect the changing environmental agenda and align with the corporate direction of the bodies involved. Consequently, issues such as climate change, greener business development and operations, community partnerships and volunteering are now represented. Arrangements have been made for a presentation to be provided to the committee at the meeting on the 6 March 2017 which will focus on: aims and objectives; context; history and development; funding and budget; partners; process and ceremony; winners and next steps.
- 4 As the scope and scale of the Awards has changed, so has the method of funding. Whilst still receiving core funding from DCC, an annual call for sponsorship is now made with a view to at least matching the DCC contribution. This has enabled the overall process to be developed into a more high profile celebration of the many facets of good environmental practice across County Durham, culminating in a prestigious annual Awards

winner's ceremony. This is supported by an ongoing media partner arrangement with the Northern Echo group which ensures media coverage at appropriate points to maximise publicity, engagement and involvement.

- 5 As the programme has evolved so have the methods of engagement:
 - a. The Awards have now moved to an online application format.
 - b. Calls for applications are shared by traditional methods and increasingly through the use of social media in order to engage better with certain parts of the community.
 - c. A live social media feed from the presentations at the ceremony has been trialled and under the new corporate communications and marketing structure, the use of digital technologies are to be further explored, perhaps using video feed to better share the messages of successful schemes.
- 6 The Awards programme now engages with a diverse cross-section of the local community but there remain opportunities to further develop this, particularly in the more people-focussed categories including community partnership and volunteering. This will ensure that as many deserving groups and individuals as possible are recognised for their achievements in improving the county's environment. Committee Members are asked to consider and support options for increasing community engagement through channels such as AAP's, community networks and locally elected councillors at all levels, given that they have a close understanding of the scope of environmental work underway in their communities. These, along with other salient points for the delivery of the Awards are invited for discussion at the meeting.

Recommendation

7. That the Committee note the information contained within the report and presentation and comment accordingly.

Background papers : n/a

Contact: [Steve Bhowmick/Bryan Harris] Tel: 03000 267122

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – The Awards incur an annual cost of £10,000 of which DCC cover 50% along with staffing support. The balance comes from external sponsorship and it is anticipated that this commitment shall continue into the future.

Staffing – A cross service team exists to service all elements of the programme

Risk – Funding is dependent on external sponsorship in support of core costs and should this be significantly reduced then continuation of programme in current form will be jeopardised.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - not applicable

Accommodation – n/a

Crime and Disorder – n/a

Human Rights – n/a

Consultation – n/a

Procurement – n/a

Disability Issues – n/a

Legal Implications – n/a