
COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION TO DARLINGTON PARTNERSHIP

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek views on developing a task and finish group to organise the contribution from communities to the Darlington Partnership.

Summary

2. The task and finish group would develop a proposal for how a community contribution to Darlington Partnership is developed. This would sit alongside mechanisms to deliver public, voluntary and private sector contributions. The proposal has been developed from earlier discussions with elected members, including Member briefings earlier in the year. It is put forward as a starting point for debate, not a finalised proposal.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) A task and finish group, under the leadership of the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, but including membership from across committees, be formed to address the questions outlined below.

Murray Rose,
Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

None.

David Plews : Extension 2023

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder at this stage
Health and Well Being	This report has no implications to address Health and Well being at this stage
Carbon Impact	There are no issues relating to carbon impact at this stage
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address at this point in time
Wards Affected	This report does not impact on a particular Ward, but Darlington as a whole
Groups Affected	This report has the potential to impact on all groups
Budget and Policy Framework	Contributes to delivery of Darlington Together and the Council's business model
Key Decision	This is not a Key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an Urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Proposals developed from this Task and Finish Group would support delivery of One Darlington Perfectly Placed
Efficiency	This report does not identify specific efficiency savings at this stage

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

4. This report seeks views to develop a proposal for how a community contribution to Darlington Partnership is developed. This would sit alongside mechanisms to deliver public, voluntary and private sector contributions. The proposal has been developed from earlier discussions with elected members, including Member briefings earlier in the year. It is put forward as a starting point for debate, not a finalised proposal.
5. The suggestion is to develop a form of community board to organise the contribution from communities to the Darlington Partnership.
6. The purpose of the community contribution would be:
 - (a) to ensure strong community voice within the Darlington Partnership arrangements;
 - (b) to ensure that Partnership action priorities have a route for delivery within communities;
 - (c) to facilitate community solutions to local problems;
 - (d) to enhance and develop the councillors' community leadership role
 - (e) to enable involvement of local councillors in the Darlington Partnership arrangements.

Representation

7. A system of one representative per ward is suggested. The representative would be one elected member from that ward. This would give a board of 24 representatives. The chair could be the responsible Cabinet member. This would provide full geographic coverage of the borough.

8. It is anticipated that other communities of identity and/or interest will also be interested in contributing to the agenda. There is an argument that the youth MP could also be involved on the board as another representative with a democratic mandate. But this raises a question about how other communities of identity and/or interest should be represented, e.g. faith groups, older people, disabled people, people from BME groups, etc. The representation arrangements for these communities would be much less clear-cut. It has been suggested that community board members could provide informal links to any or all of these groups as required, escalating business back to board meetings where needed. The disadvantage of this more informal approach to getting things done is a weakening of accountability. This is a tension on which Member views would be helpful to discuss.
9. Wider community involvement could be facilitated through assemblies or similar events and the use by board members of appropriate local communication channels.

Resourcing

10. There are a number of constitutional and resourcing issues to be addressed as a part of this process. There is currently no resource allocated within the Council to facilitate and enable this process. There are options that may be pursued, depending upon the final proposal developed.
11. Hosting the meetings from within the Town Hall has advantages and disadvantages - most of the disadvantages are to do with how this would be perceived by the wider community, and the potential for this to be seen as only an extension of Council and not relevant to the wider population.

Work Programme

12. As a demonstration of a commitment to Darlington Together, the community board's work would be agreed collectively and delivered outside the meetings. The Board's main business would be facilitating community solutions to local problems by offering leadership and, where necessary, co-ordination. Board meetings would be valuable only inasmuch as they facilitated more opportunities for joint working or the sharing of learning from work within wards that would have wider application.

Questions

13. It is suggested that a work programme is developed to address the following questions:
 - (a) How do Members think their contribution to Darlington Partnership is best managed?
 - (b) How could geographic representation be most effectively organised?
 - (c) How could communities of identity and/or interest be best represented?
 - (d) What should be the arrangements for wider community involvement, e.g. general members of the public?
 - (e) What are the options for resourcing the Board, at a time of reducing public funds, is most realistic?
 - (f) What are the best arrangements for Chairing such a group?
 - (g) What are the implications for Members' constitutional roles e.g. are they representing the Council when at the meetings, or themselves?
 - (h) What is the relationship between a proposed community board and the Darlington Partnership Board? And Scrutiny Committees?

Outcome of Consultation

14. The arrangements for delivering the community's contribution to the work of Darlington Partnership will be an important way of delivering Darlington Together. It is important to get Members' views on this proposal before it is developed further.
15. It is proposed that a Task and Finish Group, under the leadership of the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee but including membership from across committees, be formed to address the questions outlined in the questions section above.