
CHANGES TO PARTNERSHIPS IN DARLINGTON

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Andrew Scott,
Health and Partnerships Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of People

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to ensure Members are aware of changes in partnership arrangements in Darlington, noting the on-going discussions in relation to Darlington's future Health and Well Being Board.

Summary

2. Darlington Partnership began a review in January 2011, following significant policy changes from Government and the removal of some central government requirements. Locally, partners are very keen to continue with the vision and priorities for the Darlington Partnership, as outlined in *One Darlington: Perfectly Placed*.
3. Annual Action Priorities will be agreed for the Partnership, providing activity in key areas which require partnership focus and can be operationally delivered within 12 months.
4. New sector-led groupings have been agreed, along with a suggestion of a 'pledge' from each sector in relation to what they will achieve in that year.
5. Existing LSP Theme groups will be phased out over the next six months. Officer group arrangements will be put in place to support Cabinet decision making, and to support the development of the Shadow Health and Well Being Board.
6. The arrangements for the Health and Well Being Board will emerge following further deliberation with partners and further guidance from Government. Council officers and health partners have been meeting in a formative Health and Well Being Board, Chaired by the Leader of the Council, which has laid a good foundation for the development of the official Shadow Health and Well Being Board. The key messages from Government in relation to Health and Well Being Boards have changed significantly over the last nine months, and it will be important to take time to ensure that future local arrangements reflect the needs of Darlington.

7. Darlington signed up for Pathfinder Health and Well Being Board status, and the requirements associated with this have been met through the existing arrangements, and will be formalised further in coming months.
8. It will be important to avoid a proliferation of additional partnership groups outside of these processes without detailed consideration of the arrangements and the impact on Council officer and partners' time. The priority for Council officers will be in ensuring that the arrangements outlined here, including the effective development of Darlington's Health and Well Being Board, are implemented and having a strong impact on outcomes affecting local people.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) Cabinet note the progress made in changing partnership arrangements in Darlington.
 - (b) Cabinet note the discussions taking place with partners to further develop partnerships particularly in relation to Health and Well Being.
 - (c) Cabinet confirm the commitment to use of officer time as outlined in this document.

Reasons

10. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
 - (a) To facilitate effective partnership working in Darlington in response to policy and financial changes
 - (b) To ensure continued partnership delivery of the priorities of *One Darlington: Perfectly Placed*.

Murray Rose
Director of People

Background Papers

There are no background papers to this report

Chris Sivers : Extension 2013

S17 Crime and Disorder	The paper proposes that the Council will fulfil its requirements for partnership working on crime and disorder through different partnership groups. These are outlined in the paper.
Health and Well Being	The paper proposes that the Council will fulfil its requirements for partnership working on health and well being through different partnership groups than currently.
Carbon Impact	There are no implications arising from this report.
Diversity	There are no implications arising from this report.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	The proposals outlined here are in line with the Council's budget and policy framework and will assist in meeting future policy directives.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The arrangements outlined in this paper will assist in meeting the priorities in One Darlington: Perfectly Placed during a time of decreasing resource and capacity.
Efficiency	The proposals outlined will require less involvement from Council staff, and by working more closely with public sector partners, has the potential to significantly improve efficiency of joint delivery.

MAIN REPORT

Background Context

11. Darlington Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership for Darlington. It brings together people from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors to work together on common priorities. Its top-level priorities are outlined within the Sustainable Community Strategy, *One Darlington: Perfectly Placed*.
12. In January 2011, the Darlington Partnership agreed to begin a review of its working arrangements and priorities. At that time, partnership working arrangements were focused around the Partnership Board, and Executive Group and five theme groups as follows:-
 - Aspiring Darlington (incorporating the Children's Trust)
 - Greener Darlington
 - Healthy Darlington
 - Prosperous Darlington
 - Safer Darlington (incorporating the Community Safety Partnership).
13. These theme groups were focused on delivery arrangements, ensuring oversight and accountability for the Local Area Agreement and Public Service Agreements. Each of these

groups also had an executive group and some had additional sub-groups and network arrangements.

14. By December 2010, the policy landscape was significantly changing. New proposals relating to partnership arrangements in policing and community safety as well as health and social care were being developed at a national level. The introduction of the Local Enterprise Partnerships was being rolled out on a different spatial level. There were significant changes being proposed in relation to regional and sub-regional development, including the development of ideas around the localism agenda.
15. Central Government's priority of deficit reduction and the significant reduction in public sector budgets began to take effect during this time as well. Reductions in staffing and the beginnings of the impact of reductions in services began to be felt, with more reductions planned. This has reduced the ability of public sector agencies to service and to field staff at partnership meetings.
16. The statutory requirements in relation to partnership working were also changing. The Comprehensive Area Assessment, a judgement of performance in local areas, was removed. As were Local Area Agreements, an agreement between localities and central government on achievement of a particular set of agreed targets. The National Indicator Set (NIS), a list of 200 indicators that Government would require from local authorities, was abolished, with a new Single Data List outlining the returns required from Government in its place. The Government also announced its intention to repeal the local government Duty to Involve. The stated intention was to remove top-down targets, guidance and duties, enabling local collaboration to flourish.
17. At the same time, in discussions with the Darlington Partnership Executive Group, there was a growing impression that the five theme groups had the beginnings of operating as silos. There was concern amongst the Group that treating issues facing communities, families and individuals in these five discreet blocks was an unhelpful way of working, and did not sufficiently recognise the complexities of the issues nor make the most of potential synergies by working across them.
18. In this context, it was appropriate to review the Darlington Partnership. The Council put forward the idea of the review in December 2010, with a discussion of the context outlined above. The challenge for the Partnership was whether it wished to continue, given the removal of prescription, and if so, what function would it have, and what might its priorities be.
19. A series of workshops and discussion meetings were undertaken, and a draft model and position was given at the Darlington Partnership Board in September 2011, with an Implementation Plan agreed at the Executive Group in November 2011. Further conversations have taken place with regard to the arrangements for the public sector, which were concluded late January 2012.

Outcomes of the Review of Darlington Partnership

20. The Darlington Partnership confirmed that it found value in meeting and working together, and would wish to continue, with some changes. The commitment to continue to work together has been very strong. The Board confirmed, very clearly, that the vision for the Borough, *One Darlington: Perfectly Placed*, was the right vision and priorities, and that they would wish to build on the work done previously to deliver this. There has been a desire to rebalance relationships at Board level, recognising that without prescription, the

potential for private and voluntary sectors to play a greater role would increase. At the same time, it was recognised that the impact of the financial pressures on public sector agencies may drive them to work more closely together, with a need for more robust governance arrangements. It was agreed that this would be better done outside of regular Board meetings, but would be an important part of the Partnership's business.

21. As such, it was agreed that in future, Partnership activity would be organised by sector – public, private and voluntary, with each sector taking responsibility for its 'pledge' to the Darlington Partnership. This would enable each sector to find ways of working that best suited them: private sector partners could focus more on actions that would improve the local economy, whilst public sector may have a greater focus on joint commissioning, for example.
22. This means that the Theme groups mentioned above will no longer continue in their current form. Each sector will have responsibility for ensuring appropriate involvement from the others, to ensure that cross-sector working takes place, and that the new arrangements do not simply become a new arrangement of separated, silo working.
23. It was agreed that the Darlington Partnership Board mission would be:-

To bring together all those who are committed to achieve the best for Darlington and its people.

24. The work of the Board would be focused around three key areas:-
 - (a) Developing action priorities – a small number of key areas on which the Partnership could have an impact within a year
 - (b) Planning for One Darlington: Perfectly Placed – ensuring delivery of activity to achieve these two outcomes, largely delegated to the public sector to arrange
 - (c) Support for a Darlington Together approach.
25. It has been recognised that one of the most important roles of the Board, and the Partnership as a whole, will be as a network of individuals and organisations concerned about the future of Darlington. Whereas in the past the focus of some business would have necessarily been on production of plans and agreement of strategies, in future there will be greater opportunity for networking and overcoming barriers to progress in the local area. The arrangements are still developing, and will continue to include Partnership Assemblies on key priority areas of interest, as well as smaller more informal networking opportunities, including use of social media. As the resources of public sector organisations become more constrained, developing and maximising the potential of such networking will assume even greater importance.
26. The Action Priorities for the Partnership will not necessarily be the top priorities for the Borough as a whole, or indeed for any single agency. It is intended that they are agreed as priority areas that can only be effectively addressed in partnership. A set of criteria for developing Action Priorities was agreed by the Partnership as those:
 - (a) having an impact on the outcomes expressed in the Partnership's vision
 - (b) requiring cross-sector action
 - (c) where the Partnership can have an impact within twelve months.

27. Following discussions at its meeting in November, Darlington Partnership's 2012 agreed action priorities are:
- (a) vocational opportunities for young people
 - (b) ageing
 - (c) alcohol.
28. At the time of writing, the specific 'pledge' from each sector is continuing to be developed. However, there has been significant progress from the private sector in relation to vocational opportunities for young people, with the launch on 26 January 2012 of the Darlington Foundation for Jobs, and the on-going Northern Echo promotion of this campaign.
29. At the time of writing, arrangements for the private sector and voluntary sector were in development, but becoming more established. The private sector are building on the existing Prosperous Darlington group, with a particular focus on the development of Darlington's Economic Strategy and its implementation. The voluntary sector has existing arrangements with both the Chief Officers and Chairs which will be adapted from their existing form to enable decision making in the new arrangements. Arrangements for the public sector are explained below.
30. In addition to the three sector approach outlined above, it has been agreed to undertake further work in relation to a community workstream. It has been recognised that 'community' does not constitute a sector as such, though the Partnership is keen to have better engagement with communities. The role of elected Members as the key individuals in their areas with the democratic mandate to speak on behalf of the area is also recognised. The Council's Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee has established a Task and Finish group to consider the implications and potential arrangements for ensuring effective Member communication and involvement, as well as the wider reach into and with communities themselves. The Task and Finish Group is due to report to the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in March 2012.

Public Sector Working Arrangements

31. One of the challenges facing partners in developing arrangements for the public sector strand, has been that the requirements in relation to new partnership arrangements (particularly the Health and Well Being Board and the Police and Crime Commissioners) are yet to be finalised at central Government level. In addition, no existing arrangements were in place to readily adapt for the new way of working. Some partners were understandably anxious to ensure that the range of issues and agendas that concerned them were going to be adequately reflected in any new working arrangements. Partners have been concerned to ensure that agreed arrangements were in place before removing any existing arrangements which, on the whole, were working well.
32. Still subject to the successful passage of the Health and Social Care Bill and therefore impacted by further direction and development, arrangements to establish Darlington's Health and Well Being Board will be subject to further discussion and work, recognising the potential need to further respond to guidance as it emerges. There have been some significant changes to Department of Health tone and guidance in recent weeks, and it is important to give opportunity for more discussion with partners about these changes. As it is currently envisaged, the Health and Well Being Board will assume the expected responsibilities already set out in guidance and will include final approval of the Single

Needs Assessment and the Area Wide Strategy (Health and Well Being Strategy), developing mutual accountability across organisations for delivery. The Board will also provide feedback and critique plans of partner agencies to ensure alignment with other strategies, including the Clinical Commissioning Group's strategy. It will encourage and promote joint commissioning. A further paper will be presented to Cabinet to confirm arrangements for this.

33. In order to avoid a proliferation of groups, officer activity to support partnership working will be consolidated. Existing arrangements with regard to the previous LSP Theme Groups will be streamlined, with a smaller number of groups that largely involve the same key people. There are planned to be an officer group at Chief Officer level and at planning/commissioning level to ensure coherence across the partnership strategy and delivery. An immediate task will be reviewing the existing sub-group arrangements to reflect the new streamlined partnership working, whilst ensuring delivery on existing strategies. The officer groups will be tasked with ensuring the elements of statutory responsibilities in relation to partnership working for community safety and children and young people are carried out. These primarily relate to production of needs assessments and joint strategies.

Conclusion

34. The outcome of these changes will mean a significant reduction in the number of partnership meetings taking place, which often include the same people and often include consideration of the same or similar papers and issues. There will be fewer meetings and fewer strategies and plans. This will both enable greater sustainability for such partnership activity, but also a greater focus on what we can do jointly, thereby enhancing value for money and ensuring greater focus on key priorities. It will be important to maintain and develop appropriate engagement mechanisms for those not directly involved in the new arrangements to continue the strong partnership focus that exists in Darlington.
35. To provide assurance to Cabinet it is helpful to note that, throughout the implementation of the changes outlined, the Council's Partnership Toolkit will continue to be used to ensure that the partnerships that the Council is involved in continue to meet appropriate governance standards. Cabinet will receive a report on all Significant Partnerships as usual in June. In accordance with Financial Procedure Rules, the creation of all new partnerships require approval by both the responsible Director in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder and the Darlington Partnership Director and for those classed significant, approval from Cabinet.

Outcome of Consultation

36. The changes outlined here were the subject of significant consultation throughout the year. The fact that it took nearly a year to complete shows both the complexity of the discussions and negotiations and also the extent to which agencies had opportunity for involvement in the development of the ideas and proposals.
37. Member briefings took place at both the start and towards the end of the process, culminating in the establishment of the Task and Finish Group being conducted by the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.
38. The proposals outlined in this paper are the amalgamation of responses from the range of consultations that took place over the last year.