

**LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP**

**1<sup>st</sup> Meeting**

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 at 12noon, Committee Room 3**

**Present: - Councillor Newall in the Chair; Councillors Knowles, Landers, Long, Macnab, Maddison, E. A. Richmond, S. Richmond, A. Scott and H. Scott.**

**Officers: - Chris Sivers, Assistant Director – Development and Commissioning and Abbie Metcalfe, Democratic Officer.**

Councillor Newall welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Members to consider the draft Terms of Reference which was tabled. It was suggested that a couple of minor changes be made to the Terms of Reference including adding Community feedback into the process and the Director of the Darlington Partnership as an additional resource.

Chris Sivers, Assistant Director – Development and Commissioning provided an overview of the recent review of Darlington Partnership and the change of emphasis within the partnership to a more sector approach driven through public, private and voluntary sectors focussing on three key priorities; those being alcohol, ageing and employment opportunities for young people.

Ms Sivers advised that the purpose of the Task and Finish Review Group was to generate a proposal for how a community contribution to Darlington Partnership is developed; that it would sit alongside mechanisms to deliver public, voluntary and private sector contributions. It was acknowledged that elected Members as Community Leaders are well placed to represent community views and there is also a desire from Members to be more involved and engaged with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP); the challenge is how this could be done.

Councillor Andy Scott, Cabinet Portfolio holder for Health and Partnerships reported that he had visited a number of Community Partnerships since September 2011 and found lots of good work was being undertaken in the community. Local areas tend to concentrate of specific issues to develop initiatives, but there was no common theme, the common denominator was an elected Member being present at each meeting. It was acknowledged that each Community Partnership was unique with different structures and priorities, with varied capacity. The vision for a Community Sector arm of the LSP would re-engage Councillors and the community and be inclusive. Cllr Scott advised that defining Community Groups was quite difficult and are usually defined as general interest groups that can be identified by a geographical area. This mainly includes Community Partnerships and residents associations.

Cllr Scott suggested two ideas, advising that other options and, or ideas were welcomed from Members.

**Idea 1**

A formal structure of one representative per ward; 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.

**Idea 2**

An informal structure of quarterly briefings and representatives from Community Groups would be invited to attend. The responsible Cabinet Member would brief the meeting and gather community feedback.

Both ideas would not include Parish Councils as they are already represented on the LSP Board.

Discussion ensued and the following points and issues were raised:-

- Openness and transparency of the LSP as a whole and the reasons why Board meetings are not held on public or Minutes publically circulated;
- Membership of the LSP Board – whether they are too many Local Authority representatives on the Board, the size of the Board and changing the style of the Board meeting to be more inclusive;
- Difficulties of defining Community Groups and the inclusion of Men’s and Women’s Groups;
- Better publicity of the work of Darlington Partnership is required, changing people’s perception of Darlington Partnership; exploiting the benefits of partnerships working and advertising what can be achieved through partners working together;
- Caution was expressed about repeating past mistakes, returning to the old ways of the Steering Groups of Action Plans;
- There needs to be forum where there can be an interchange of views and opinions allowing views to be shared and taken into consideration;
- There needs to be an agreed definition of what a Community Group is and how a community sector would differ from the Voluntary Sector;
- Whether a mapping exercise could be carried out to establish how many Community Groups there are in Darlington;
- Whether a meeting of all Community Groups could be held to discuss what the real issues are and how to report those issues to the LSP;
- Reporting back arrangements – there would need to be a mechanism to ensure that issues are taken seriously and reported to the Board and consequently a report of the Boards intentions of how to handle the issues. There needs to be more proactive responses from the Board, not to dishearten Community Groups;
- Maintain the three Community Representatives on the LSP Board but make them more legitimate and accountable;
- Creating job descriptions to make the Community Representatives accountable and create a better understanding of what the role entails;

- Themed Groups – were right at the time, and over time have varied in reporting mechanisms to Scrutiny Committees;
- Some Themed Groups are reinventing themselves and work will continue in a less formal way;
- Difficulties in trying to get everyone involved and encourage communities to create a forum for debate to support them to enable them to deliver priorities;
- Volunteers are crucial but making them accountable may not be appropriate and ultimately could lose their enthusiasm; and
- There needs to be a mechanism for implementing outcomes.

**AGREED –**

- a) **That the Director of Darlington Partnership be invited to the next meeting of the Task and Finish Review Group meeting.**
- b) **That feedback received from the Community Partnerships and Resident Associations be included as part of the process of the review and considered at the next meeting.**
- c) **That the amended Terms of Reference be agreed.**
- d) **That Members receive a list of LSP Board Members for information.**
- e) **That there is a strong need for community involvement in the Local Strategic Partnership by means of an informal arrangement and that further discussion on how this would happen and look like to take place at the next meeting.**
- f) **That Members of other Scrutiny Committees be thanked for their attendance and are encouraged to attend the next meeting.**
- g) **That the next meeting of the Task and Finish Review Group be held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2012 at 11.30am (or on the rising of health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee) in Committee Room 2.**