

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Friday, 25 June 2021

PRESENT – Councillors Tait (Chair), Bartch, Mrs Culley, B Jones, McCollom, Wallis and Willis

APOLOGIES – Councillors Allen, Cossins, Donoghue and Haszeldine

ABSENT –

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Mrs H Scott (Leader of the Council) and Dulston

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Ian Williams (Chief Executive), Seth Pearson (Partnership Director) and Hannah Fay (Democratic Officer)

CLS7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Culley declared an interest as the Director of Darlington Support.

CLS8 PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN DARLINGTON

A report (previously circulated) was submitted following the receipt of a 'call-in' from Cabinet held on 1 June, 2021 (Minute C8/Jun/21) in relation to its decision in respect of Partnership Working in Darlington. The 'Call-in' was taken in accordance with the Council's Constitution and had been signed by three Members of this Council.

The Chair invited those Members who had signed the documentation and who had requested that the decision be 'called-in' to outline their reasons for that decision and, in doing so, raised questions and sought clarification to understand whether and how partnership working would function with sectors other than the public sector; to explore whether and how partnership working would function cross sector; to understand what analysis had been completed on Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) outcomes and where DBC outcomes did not overlap; and to explore how gaps would be taken forward within DBC policy.

Members enquired as to the purpose, strengths and weaknesses of the Darlington Partnership, and the basis of the decision to cease the Darlington Partnership and the SCS.

The Cabinet Member with Stronger Communities Portfolio in responding extended his thanks to Alasdair MacConachie for his service and role as Chair of Darlington Partnership Board; advised Members that the Darlington Partnership had seen a decline in membership; that the Darlington Partnership would be replaced by the Stronger Communities Board which was not yet live; and confirmed that a Public Sector Executive Group (PSEG) would be established which would report into the Stronger Communities Board. Members were advised of the work undertaken to develop a Council Plan that targeted key areas for residents of Darlington.

The background to the establishment of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was outlined to

Members; following the cessation of the statutory requirement to have an LSP in 2010, Darlington continued with this approach, however over time the partnership had lost its focus, direction and participation and was in need of a refresh; and that partners recognised the need for change.

Particular reference was made to the work that had been undertaken outside of the Board, delivered by the Director of the Partnership and partners; and that the Director had been the driving force in delivering the many projects.

Reference was also made to the work undertaken by the Darlington Partnership in linking the business community into the work of the Council; and details provided of the range of forums in place to capture the voice of businesses in Darlington.

Members sought further clarification in respect of the Stronger Communities Board and were advised that this Board would include key representatives from partner organisations, providing an opportunity to network and to build and nurture relationships; and it was anticipated that the Board would go live in January 2022.

The Members who had signed the call-in document raised particular concern in respect of the effectiveness of the Council Plan, highlighting that the plan lacked the level of detail provided by the SCS.

The Cabinet Member with Stronger Communities Portfolio reiterated that the Council Plan covered the key themes identified to be important to residents; captured the main interventions of the Council; and was fit for purpose. In addition, the Council Plan was an evolving document but broadly set out the Council's priorities for the next four years.

Reference was made to the development of a local dataset, following the abeyance of national indicator sets, of which the PSEG would have oversight; and that this would provide a mechanism to measure the effectiveness of the Council's interventions.

RESOLVED – That, having considered and heard all the information presented to and at this meeting, this Scrutiny Committee is satisfied with the decision of Cabinet at Minute C8/Jun/21 and that no further action in relation to the call-in is required.