

SPECIAL PLENARY MEETING

10.30am: Friday 19 September 2008

Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Gateshead

ASSOCIATION OF
NORTH EAST COUNCILS



AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**
2. **MINUTES** of the Annual Meeting held on 27 June 2008 (*No.2 attached*).

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3. **REGIONAL SCRUTINY & ACCOUNTABILITY** Chief Executive to present (*No.3 attached*).

4. **CONSULTATION RESPONSES:**

- 4a) **'FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD TO THE NATIONAL: POLICING OUR COMMUNITIES TOGETHER'** Chief Executive to present (*No.4a attached*);
and
- 4b) **'THE FUTURE OF THE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT REWARD SCHEME'**
Chief Executive to present (*To follow*).

CONFIDENTIAL ITEM (circulated to members only).

5. **SUB NATIONAL REVIEW – TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS** Chief Executive to present (*No.5 attached*).

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS.**

7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** 11.30am on Friday 30 January 2009 – venue to be confirmed.
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ANNUAL MEETING

Friday 27 June 2008
Quadrant, Cobalt Business Park, Silverlink North

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MINUTES

PRESENT:

Gateshead MBC	MF Henry (Chair)	North Tyneside MBC	JM Allan
Alnwick DC	JA Taylor		L Arkley
Berwick upon Tweed BC	EI Hunter		L Goveas
Blyth Valley BC	J Newman		JLL Harrison
Castle Morpeth BC	HGH Sanderson	Northumberland CC	PA Jackson
Chester le Street DC	L Ebbatson		J Reid
Darlington BC	DA Lyonette		R Styring
	J Williams		V Tyler
Durham CC	J Armstrong	Redcar & Cleveland BC	G Dunning
	S Henig		I Jeffrey
	N Martin	Sedgefield BC	AM Armstrong
	E Tomlinson	South Tyneside MBC	I Malcolm
Gateshead MBC	KM Dodds	Sunderland CC	D Allan
	I Mearns		D Forbes
Hartlepool BC	P Hargreaves		H Trueman
Middlesbrough BC	J Brunton		P Watson
	D Budd		T Wright
Newcastle CC	D Faulkner		
	J M ^c Carty		
	J Shipley		
	G Stone		

IN ATTENDANCE:

Climate Change Schools Project	K M ^c Kinzey
Directorate	MJ Laws
	H Knox
	R Mitchell
	N Smith
	L Etheridge
	A Christie
Sedgefield BC	V Crosby

APOLOGIES:

Darlington BC	I Haszeldine	Newcastle CC	N Forbes
Durham CC	J Brown		D Huddart
Durham DC	F Reynolds		D Slesenger
	C Robson	North Tyneside MBC	E Hodson
	M Williams	Northumberland CC	D Ledger
Easington DC	A Napier	Redcar & Cleveland BC	S Clarke
Gateshead MCB	J Eagle	South Tyneside MBC	A Kerr
	JW Hamilton	Stockton on Tees BC	K Lupton
Hartlepool BC	S Drummond	Sunderland CC	F Anderson
Middlesbrough BC	R Kerr		B Charlton
		Wansbeck DC	A Wallace
		One NorthEast Board	A Cunningham

1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed members to the third Annual Meeting of the Association since its re-launch in 2005, stating that the Association had become well-established as the representative body and political voice for local government, due to its ability to work collaboratively, on a cross-party basis to unite behind the key priorities for the sector.

Councillor Henry highlighted strong local authority leadership as being critical in meeting the challenges that faced the region, especially in relation to economic, social and environmental well-being of citizens and communities.

Member involvement at the heart of the Association's decision-making process had been critical to the success of the Task & Finish Groups on Climate Change and the Role of Elected Members. The Chair took the opportunity to thank those members who had contributed to the Groups.

The strong support of local government through the Association had resulted in the development of the North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and its ambitious programme to deliver transformational change across a range of public services.

The changing political landscape was highlighted, in particular the creation of two new unitary councils, the emergence of city regions, the implementation of the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration and the continued drive for improvement. This would shape what the Association would do and how it would achieve its aims for the future. The Corporate Plan for 2008-11 and the Delivery Plan 2008/09 identified a number of areas where the Chair believed that the Association could make a difference.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked all the membership and, also, his Vice Chairs, Councillors Linda Ebbatson and Nigel Martin, who had played key roles in the Association over the past year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor MF Henry (Gateshead Council) be appointed as Chair of the Association to serve until the Annual Meeting in 2009.

The Chair took the opportunity to congratulate South Tyneside Council on the award of 'Council of the Year' by the Municipal Journal.

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRS

RESOLVED that Councillors L Ebbatson (Chester le Street District Council) and N Martin (Durham County Council) be appointed as Vice Chairs of the Association to serve until the Annual Meeting in 2009.

The Chair advised that it was proposed that Councillor Pamela Hargreaves (Hartlepool Borough Council) would shadow Councillor Ebbatson in her role as Vice Chair, with a view to taking over as majority party Vice Chair in 2009.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Plenary Meeting held on 25 January 2008 be agreed as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Minute No.24: Concessionary Bus Travel

Concern was expressed at the withdrawal of bus services within the region by Arriva and it was proposed that the Association should contact the company to discuss the position.

6. ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATION

Members were advised of the appointments to the Association and Executive Committee by individual member authorities for 2008/09. An update was tabled at the meeting for information.

It was proposed that with the creation of two new unitary councils in Durham and Northumberland, the forthcoming year could provide an opportunity for the Association to review its membership.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the appointment of representatives to the Association and Executive Committee for 2008/09 be noted;
- b) the following definitions be agreed in the operation of the Association:

Majority Party	:	Labour
Minority Parties	:	Conservative, Independent and Liberal Democrat;
- c) the Chair and Vice Chairs be authorised to approve the appointment of Minority Party co-options where required in conjunction with member authorities in the county areas concerned; and
- d) a review of Association membership be carried out with a report submitted to members in due course.

7. OVERVIEW OF 2007/08

The Director gave an overview presentation of Association activities 2007/08 (*a copy of the presentation is available on request*).

The Director drew attention to the review document, '*Picture of the Year in Highlights*', which focussed on the Association's work over what she felt had been a very productive year.

The Director highlighted the following areas:

- the production by the Climate Change Task & Finish Group of a significant report that had been well received and had impact and influence nationally and in the region;
- transport and connectivity, which had featured strongly. She drew attention drawn to Network Rail's announcement of proposals to look at high speed rail;
- the Association had influenced national discussions on the three year settlement for local government and had supported the case for a fair regional concessionary bus travel scheme;
- although North East councils continued to perform extremely well, the Association had been clear on its commitment for continuous improvement – this had been underpinned by the successful bid for £16.5m funding over the next three years;
- health and well-being was at the core of local government's agenda and the Association had provided leadership in a range of key areas, including the introduction of smoke free public places;

- March saw the first ever local government awards ceremony and the ShiNE Awards had made a major contribution to the profile and reputation of local government in the region;
- in relation to engagement and advocacy, the Association continued to deliver a wide range of actions which included debating the Association's commitment to climate change at the party conferences, regular briefings for MPs and the generation of significant positive media coverage for local government; and
- acknowledgement of the changing roles of councillors by the final report of the Role of Elected Members Task & Finish Group which had influenced the work of the Councillors Commission.

The Director took the opportunity to thank members for their support over the past year.

The Chair thanked the Director and the Team.

Members welcomed the production of the '*Picture of the Year in Highlights*', adding that it provided an excellence tool to assist members with the promotion of local government.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the overview presentation of 2007/08 be received;
- b) consideration be given to the role of the Association in supporting and driving renewable energy targets; and
- c) the Association should continue to press for change in relation to terms and conditions for members.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE: WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

The Deputy Director advised that the Association had identified and taken forward a number of opportunities aimed at ensuring that the 45 recommendations of the Climate Change Task & Finish Group were being addressed.

One of the recommendations was the production of a Green Manifesto with key themes around winning hearts and minds, greener/cleaner energy, waste and recycling, green procurement, sustainable transport, water usage/conservation, energy efficiency and addressing fuel poverty. It was envisaged that the document would be launched at the autumn Party Conferences.

The Task & Finish Group had also recommended that each local authority should have a designated Climate Change Champion at both member and chief officer level and members were asked to take this forward with their authorities.

Engagement with young people was key to winning hearts and minds, therefore, the Association was participating in a working group implementing a '*Climate Change Schools Project*', the aim of which was to steer the development and implementation of a standardised package of climate change school resources and professional development opportunities for school teachers in all local authorities in the North East.

The Chair introduced Dr Krista McKinzey, Climate Change Schools Project Officer, who gave a presentation to members on the work of the Project (*a copy of the presentation is available on request*).

Dr McKinzey advised that the ground breaking pilot project, helped engage and empower young people to be confident about climate change and taking control and doing something about forging a better future. A number of organisations were involved in the

Project, which covered schools from across the region. It was pointed out that should the pilot be successful, there was potential for it to be mainstreamed into the National Curriculum.

In response to a question, Dr McKinzey confirmed that the Project included independent schools.

The Chair thanked Dr McKinzey for a very interesting presentation.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the progress made since the publication of the Climate Change Task & Finish Group's Report be noted;
- b) the adoption of a Climate Change Champion in each local authority at member and chief officer level be supported;
- c) the proposal for the development and launch of a Green Manifesto be supported; and
- d) the Climate Change Schools Project pilot in the North East be supported.

9. CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF TOBACCO CONTROL

The report advised of the publication in May of the Government's *'Consultation on the Future of Tobacco Control'* which comprised four key areas:

- further action to reduce smoking rates and health inequalities caused by smoking;
- protecting children and young people from smoking;
- helping smokers to quit; and
- helping those who cannot quit.

The consultation acknowledged the role of stakeholders in the development of the future strategy to control tobacco use and recognised that reducing the impact of tobacco within communities required a multi-faceted approach at local, regional, national and international levels.

At the regional level, Fresh-Smoke Free North East had organised a number of events, including a regional launch of the consultation. Fresh had also produced a toolkit to assist local authorities to respond to the consultation, the deadline for which was 8 September.

The issue of enforcement was raised and it was suggested that the Association should discuss the issue with Trading Standards and HM Customs & Excise. Also raised was the sale of tobacco, particularly vending machines located in public areas and children's access to tobacco.

RESOLVED that:

- a) an Association response, taking account of comments made by members, to the *'Consultation on the Future of Tobacco Control'* be circulated for comment to the Executive Committee, with the Chair and Vice Chairs authorised to endorse the response for submission by the deadline of 8 September; and
- b) all local authorities be encouraged to submit individual responses and, where possible, promote it to staff, partner organisations and members of the public.

10. SCOPING THE TACKLING OF CHILD POVERTY TASK & FINISH GROUP

In May, Executive Committee agreed the establishment of a Task & Finish Group to examine some of the issues around child poverty in the region and produce a report and

recommendations for local government. Nominations to the Group would be sought shortly, with the work of the Group starting in September.

It was acknowledged that the potential scope for work around child poverty was enormous, therefore, it was proposed that the Group would focus on a small number of areas such as:

- understanding the data on child poverty;
- child poverty and health;
- child poverty and schools/early years;
- child poverty and the role of elected members;
- child poverty and benefits; and
- identifying the sharing of activity and best practice in the North East.

Members felt that schools/teachers needed to be involved with the Group.

Poor attendance at school was raised, which, a member commented, was often due to family pressure placed on a child to become a carer. This could result in underachievement at school. Non-attendance needed to be addressed, perhaps by working with the children and family courts system.

Attention was drawn to the work of the Childrens' Trust in Durham which had achieved very good results.

RESOLVED that the establishment of the Child Poverty Task & Finish Group, as outlined in the report, be agreed.

11. REVIEW OF SUB-NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

Circulated for information were the Association and regional responses to the Government's consultation on the implementation of the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR) as submitted by the deadline of 20 June.

The report set out discussions at the joint Executive Committee/SNR Task & Finish Group on 15 May which had informed both responses.

It was pointed out that the regional response focussed on the development of an integrated strategy and it had been made clear that the main activities and business of the organisations involved remained unaffected.

The issue of democratic deficit was raised and the Director advised that the regional response had been carefully crafted to say that the response reflected that it was based on SNR proposals as they currently stood, and could be adjusted to reflect any changes, for example in relation to planning.

In relation to scrutiny, it was anticipated that the House of Commons Modernisation Committee was aiming to report in July. This would assist in terms of the development of proposals for members to consider around fit for purpose models for scrutiny. It was proposed that an options paper be prepared which took account of the Modernisation Committee's report for consideration by members at a Special Plenary Meeting.

It was pointed out that the Hodge Review had resulted in changes to a number of regional cultural institutions and that these changes placed more emphasis on relationships with

regional organisations such as the Association, One NorthEast and Government Office for the North East.

Clarification was sought as to how the proposed Leaders Forum would relate to the wider Association membership. The Chair advised that it was also the responsibility of Leaders to feedback within their own authority. The proposal was that the Leaders Forum would serve a dual purpose as the Association Executive, thus giving a 'golden thread' of accountability back to the wider membership.

Speaking as an RDA Board Member, Councillor Jackson stressed the importance of local government involvement in the preparation of the integrated strategy. He also felt that it was vital that the Association took the lead within the region in terms of scrutiny.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the actions taken to date be endorsed; and
- b) a scrutiny options paper be prepared for consideration at a Special Plenary Meeting in the Autumn.

12. IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY

It was reported that the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy had received Ministerial approval in March, along with an announcement of the regional resource allocation of £4,202,000 in 2008/09 and £5,673,000 in both 2009/10 and 2010/2011 (provisional). In addition, the region had received £1.4m of 2007/08 Communities and Local Government underspend.

Nominations had been sought for the ten Programme Boards as identified in the Strategy, each of which was led by a Chief Executive/Director sponsor.

To coincide with the Strategy, the Improvement and Efficiency Steering Group was considering the development of a Delivery Plan. Consideration was also to be given to arrangements in relation to the development of a prospectus, delegation of decision-making and delegation of funding and performance management of the Partnership.

With regard to the Programme Team, it was reported that Martin Ryan, currently Deputy Chief Executive with Tynedale Council, had been appointed as Programme Director and would take up his position on 7 July. In order to ensure continuity, the contracts of the existing staff within the three former programmes had been extended to September, with the aim of designing a new programme team based in the Guildhall.

Attention was drawn to member involvement and engagement in improvement and efficiency, with member support and development identified as a key issue within both the Strategy and Delivery Plan..

RESOLVED that:

- a) the current position in relation to improvement and efficiency be noted; and
- b) the Chair and Vice Chairs be authorised to agree the structure of the Programme Team.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

North East Assembly

The Chair proposed that given the implications of the SNR in relation to the future of the North East Assembly (NEA) and in order to ensure a smooth transition, the Association be requested to agree that the existing local authority office holders (Chair being Councillor Alex Watson and Vice Chairs, Councillors David Blackie and David Ledger) continue in their roles for the time being, subject to their agreement.

RESOLVED that the existing NEA local authority office holders be asked to continue in their roles for the time being.

Nelson Mandela

The Chair raised the issue of the 90th birthday of Nelson Mandela and expressed concern at the current situation in Zimbabwe.

RESOLVED that:

- a) a letter of congratulations be sent to Nelson Mandela to mark his 90th birthday; and
- b) a letter be sent to Robert Mugabe expressing the Association's grave concerns about the current situation in Zimbabwe.

Hospitality

On behalf of the Association, the Chair thanked North Tyneside for hosting the Annual Meeting.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting be a special meeting to consider a scrutiny options paper in the autumn (date and venue to be confirmed).

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REGIONAL SCRUTINY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Introduction

1. One of the key aspects of the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR) is that local authorities, acting collectively, will provide accountability for the single Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS).
2. At its meeting on 15 May, the Executive Committee considered a paper which set out, for members' consideration, some principles for how local authorities might exercise their scrutiny role. The Committee endorsed the approach in the paper while noting that more detailed proposals would need to be developed in the light of members' comments and further developments such as the forthcoming publication of the House of Commons Modernisation Select Committee's report on regional accountability.
3. At the Annual Meeting of the Association on 27 June, members noted the work that had been done so far and asked that a Special Plenary Meeting be arranged to discuss the options for local government to exercise its regional scrutiny role. This paper therefore puts forward a number of options for discussion. It has been prepared following discussion with regional partners including the North East Assembly (NEA) and the Regional Overview and Scrutiny Network (ROSN).

Background

4. The following principles were agreed by members as a basis for designing appropriate structures and processes:
 - scrutiny should be constructive and non-confrontational; it should add value and avoid duplication and overlap;
 - it should be forward-looking, with an emphasis on policy development leading to action, with a particular focus on the integrated regional strategy;
 - it should be outward-looking, to incorporate Government departments and agencies who have a role and impact on policy and development in the region;
 - it should concentrate resources where they are most needed;
 - structures and processes for scrutiny should be agreed through the Leaders Forum;
 - scrutiny should be a means of engaging non-executive members of local authorities in issues relating to the integrated regional strategy;
 - scrutiny should engage effectively economic, environmental and social partners;
 - scrutiny should be adequately resourced; and
 - there should be close liaison with the Parliamentary regional select committee (or whatever other Parliamentary mechanism may be established).

5. Within these principles, the focus of scrutiny work could include delivering greater accountability in respect of the IRS; testing emerging policies and the evidence base of the IRS; making recommendations for action to the Leaders Forum; and testing performance against the overall growth objective. There should be a focus on topics and themes rather than specific decisions.

Parliamentary Scrutiny

6. The '*Governance of Britain*' Green Paper (July 2007) put forward the view that the Government's regional policy should be subject to formal Parliamentary scrutiny, possibly through the establishment of regional select committees. Subsequently, in October 2007, the House of Commons Modernisation Select Committee announced that it was to conduct an inquiry into how regional accountability might work.
7. The Select Committee published its report on 10 July. Its main conclusions are as follows:
 - there is an 'accountability gap' at regional level. Regional Development Agencies (who spend £2.3 billion per annum in total) should be subject to more regular and robust scrutiny;
 - to strengthen regional accountability to Parliament, there should be a system of **regional grand and select committees** – one grand and one select committee in each English region outside London;
 - regional select committees should comprise up to 10 MPs, reflecting the political composition of the House (which in some regions, including the north east, would require the appointment of some members from outside the region);
 - they should meet around six times a year, focusing on the RDA but also looking at other agencies working at regional level such as the Learning and Skills Council, the Strategic Health Authority;
 - the new structures will need to complement local scrutiny arrangements and should therefore develop positive working arrangements with local authorities in the region to coordinate scrutiny activities;
 - the regional grand committees should comprise all MPs for the region; they should meet once or twice a year, with a general debate (or series of short debates) and questions to the Regional Minister;
 - to improve engagement with the public, the large majority of regional select and grand committee meetings should take place in the region; and
 - these arrangements should be implemented on a trial basis until the end of the present Parliament (i.e. until May 2010 at the latest), after which there should be a review.
8. The Government published its response to the Select Committee's recommendations on 21 July. Broadly speaking the Government endorses the Select Committee's proposals: it agrees that there should be a regional select committee and grand committee in each English region outside London, with membership proportionate to the political composition of the House and normally meeting in the region. It also suggests that membership of the regional select committee could be less than 10 in some smaller regions.

9. The Government's response also picks up the question of links with local authority scrutiny. It states:

'Given the specific role envisaged for local authorities in the SNR, it is important that there is the opportunity for liaison between the national and local levels to ensure that their respective scrutiny is proportionate and complementary and does not lead to duplication. Consideration should therefore be given by the [regional select] committees to setting local authority representatives a clear role. Committees would be expected to conduct a wide range of informal meetings and contacts with local authority representatives, in addition to the opportunities for formal evidence. Local authority representatives (perhaps nominated on a cross-party basis through the relevant Local Government Association regional structures) could act as a vehicle for liaison between the regional committee and the local authorities on regional matters'.

10. The response goes on to suggest that provision could be made for regional select committees to hold formal meetings with local authorities or local authority scrutiny committees or, perhaps more appropriately, groups of councillors from across the region.
11. Currently, it appears likely that, subject to Parliamentary approval, the first meetings of the Parliamentary Select Committees will be held before Christmas although these are likely to be formal meetings to elect a chair and so on.

Structures and Processes for Regional Scrutiny and Accountability

12. The Select Committee's report, and the Government's response to it, are helpful in clarifying the likely direction of Parliamentary scrutiny of regional activity and the broad thrust of how things might work in relation to other scrutiny arrangements.
13. In designing such options, careful attention needs to be given to the respective roles of the regional select committee and local authority scrutiny – to be clear, in effect, about who is scrutinising what. One of the key roles of Members of Parliament is to hold the Government and Ministers to account, judging them against the 'real world' impact of their policies. This is reflected in the Government's response to the Modernisation Select Committee:

'The key principle should be that [regional select] committees would be looking at the development or implementation of policies where there is a regional aspect to decision-taking and delivery'.

14. Local authority members, for their part, are able to take a 'bottom-up' approach to policy-making, with strategic decisions being rooted in their knowledge and assessment of local conditions; this provides a powerful evidence base for shaping proposals to improve conditions in the region, for shaping strategy and for lobbying and advocating for those proposals. Local government has the opportunity to build on this perspective and use it in the context of "scrutiny" to help develop theme-based policy proposals that will ultimately feed into the IRS. This kind of outward-facing approach not only helps to avoid duplication with the work of the regional select committee, it adds value because it is based on elected members' unique strengths and perspectives.

15. Overall, this complementary approach has the potential to create a virtuous circle in which local authority members build on their local knowledge to improve the IRS and influence initiatives such as the Northern Way while Members of Parliament hold Ministers, Government and regional agencies to account for the delivery of the Government's regional policy, and general policies as they affect the region.
16. In relation to the specific comments in the Government's response about links between the regional select committee and local authority representatives, this is a role which the Association is well-placed to pick up as the political voice for local government in the region and as the body that will ensure that Leaders play a key role in policy development and the signing-off of a new strategy. It is anticipated that "scrutiny" will be conducted through the Leaders Forum (though not necessarily by it) and therefore this needs to be built into our thinking.
17. These factors give a starting point for considering possible models. The remainder of this paper considers, firstly, the implications for the relationship with Parliamentary scrutiny, and secondly, taking this into account, models for local government to exercise its regional scrutiny function.

Relationship with Parliamentary Scrutiny

18. A joint Parliamentary and local government scrutiny model has effectively been ruled out by the House of Commons Modernisation Select Committee report and the Government's response.
19. There are three issues that any model for local government should take into account, alongside the principles set out in paragraph 4 above:
 - (i) relationships with the Regional Select Committee (and Grand Committee – although the focus for this is probably the work of the Regional Minister) – the Government suggests that local authority representatives, perhaps nominated on a cross-party basis through the relevant regional LGA (in this case ANEC), could act as a vehicle for liaison between the regional committee and local authorities on regional matters;
 - (ii) formal opportunities to give evidence to the Regional Select and Grand Committees – the suggestion is that the committees could hold meetings 'with the local authorities or local authority scrutiny committees or, perhaps more appropriately, groups of councillors from across the region'. An example is the Welsh Affairs Committee which holds occasional meetings with members of the National Assembly for Wales; similarly, elected councillors from across the region could be invited to attend and participate in meetings; and
 - (iii) relationships with the ANEC Leaders Forum/Executive – where local government scrutiny is expected to be undertaken through, but not necessarily by, the Forum.
20. On points (i) and (iii) above, there are two possible approaches. Option (a) would be for the Association simply to nominate members as and when required, depending on the issue. Option (b) would be for the Association to establish a Parliamentary Liaison Group which would work with the Committee(s) on their proposed programme and in discussing and considering the areas which local government might wish to give focus to in its collective and policy development work. This group would take advice from ANEC as a whole, liaising with the Regional Overview and Scrutiny Network on scrutiny being undertaken locally, and in return give advice and feedback to the Association and its Leaders Forum. It

would be for the membership as a whole to agree topics for local government scrutiny and policy development and endorse the approach proposed.

21. On point (ii) above, the Association could coordinate the bringing together of councillors to input into the evidence-giving process. This might vary given the topic being considered. This approach, which we could offer to the Regional Select Committee, would build on the work that the Association has done in the past in terms of giving evidence to other Parliamentary Select Committees.

Economic, Environmental and Social Partners – Parliamentary Engagement

22. It is very likely that both Parliamentary Committees will call for evidence from other non-local authority partners. How they do that and who they choose to engage with will be a matter for them.

Local Government Scrutiny Models

23. Taking all the above into account, a number of options are possible for designing a structure for local government to exercise its regional scrutiny role. The report to the Executive Committee in May suggested four options:
 - a permanent Scrutiny Board;
 - a joint Parliamentary/regional scrutiny function (now effectively ruled out);
 - a Task and Finish Group model in which a group of members is convened for the purpose of a specific review; and
 - a hybrid or combined model of a permanent scrutiny board with the ability to establish panels or task groups to carry out specific reviews.
24. Whichever model is adopted, proper resourcing of the scrutiny function is critical. The only possible sources appear to be:
 - CLG (which currently funds the Assembly); and
 - member authorities – through existing resources or by increasing the subscription – the latter is unlikely to be favourably received.
25. It is recommended that we make a strong case to Government for funding as some level of dedicated resource is essential if the regional scrutiny function is to be effective. At the same time it is worth bearing in mind that ANEC already conducts much of its business through Task and Finish Groups which harness experience and expertise from authorities and other partners and which, as a principle, should continue as such Groups engage members and ensure buy-in. Another factor to bear in mind is that if scrutiny is going to focus more on policy development and the IRS, that will complement work ANEC is likely to be doing in any event. Nevertheless, this should not detract from the case for a dedicated resource for scrutiny.
26. The different models, and their advantages and disadvantages, can be summarised as follows:

Permanent Scrutiny Board/Parliamentary Liaison Group

27. Under this option there would be a Scrutiny Board/Parliamentary Liaison Group with members drawn from ANEC and the ROSN (possibly the Chair and Vice Chair).

28. Stakeholders could be invited to participate in particular discussions, reflecting the subject matter to be discussed.
29. The Chair and Vice Chairs of the Board would be appointed at the Association's Annual Meeting. This is in fact somewhat similar to the existing NEA model, but in that circumstance Economic and Social Partners are permanent members as they are Assembly members.
30. Under this option the local authority representatives on the Board could also serve as the 'Parliamentary Liaison Group' for the purposes of liaising with the Regional Select Committee.

Advantages

- would give a clear voice and focus for scrutiny - the Board and Chair would be recognised as being accountable for the scrutiny function;
- If the core membership is also the body that liaises with the Regional Select Committee, this avoids duplication; and
- some permanent membership allows for continuity, which is likely to be an attractive feature for those involved with the regional select/grand committees and for those agencies subject to scrutiny (such as One NorthEast).

Disadvantages

- arguably too structured – not sufficiently flexible in membership to provide for expertise in terms of the potentially wide range of issues to be covered; and
- may not secure a wide buy-in as only a limited number of members would be involved.

Task and Finish Group model

31. This would most closely reflect the way in which the Association does much of its business at present. A call would be put out for members to be involved in a Task and Finish Group looking at a particular area which the Association membership had agreed should be the subject of a review. This could include an invitation for the ROSN to identify interested members, which would help to ensure that non-executive members were fully involved.
32. There could also be a call for interested economic, environmental and social partners to be involved, with a focus on identifying people with a particular interest or area of expertise in an issue, and/or perhaps through a 'call for evidence'.

Advantages

- the model is flexible and responsive;
- there is a good fit with the concept of using scrutiny to develop theme-based policy proposals that feed into the IRS;
- positive engagement of councillors and partners with a real interest in the topic, creating buy-in;
- opportunities for a wide range of members to get involved and have real influence on policy development and outcomes;
- opportunities for economic and social partners to get involved in areas of particular interest and expertise; and
- inclusive as regards political group, urban/rural split, gender balance and so on.

Disadvantages

- possible lack of a real 'focal point' for scrutiny with a different set of people carrying out reviews each time. The ANEC experience is that the Chair of the Task and Finish Group has played a key role in this respect; and
- Wholly new membership for each exercise could militate against developing productive relationships with agencies subject to scrutiny.

Combination model

33. There could be a combination of both the above models – a core board (which would act as the ANEC Parliamentary Liaison Group) and the establishment of Task and Finish Groups as required to carry out more detailed work. The model could also be developed so that a member of the core board is appointed to each Task and Finish Group, thus ensuring a beneficial level of continuity for the whole process.
34. This would enable the core board to focus on the relationship with parliamentary scrutiny and advising the Association, while enabling detailed work to be carried out by a wider group of members. The Regional Chief Executives Group recommend that this model be adopted.

Processes for Scrutiny

35. It is suggested that the Association will:
 - working with the Scrutiny Board/Parliamentary Liaison Group (if agreed), draw up a scrutiny work programme reflecting the principles and priorities set out in paragraphs 4-5 above. This will be referred to the ANEC Executive/Leaders Forum which will have a key role in agreeing topics and in receiving recommendations which will be shared and discussed with the wider Association membership. It will also be the subject of liaison with the Parliamentary regional select committee, with whom we will develop a protocol to cover issues such as topic selection;
 - convene meetings of the Scrutiny Board/Parliamentary Liaison Group and/or Task and Finish Groups as appropriate;
 - ensure that appropriate professional and technical support is provided, including commissioning research;
 - ensure that outcomes are delivered in accordance with the agreed work programme; and
 - report back to the wider membership, maintaining the 'golden thread' of accountability.
36. The IRS will always be a major focus, and it would be valuable to carry out some post-strategy evaluation in due course. However, regional scrutiny should not be confined to the IRS but should have a broader remit to consider other issues with a regional dimension, such as health and learning and skills, subject always to avoiding duplication with the work of the Parliamentary regional select committee.
37. For regional scrutiny to be effective and credible it needs to be supported with robust evidence and high-calibre advice. There is plenty of this in the region that we can (and should) tap into, both in local authorities and in academia. We should always be prepared to investigate best practice, not just in the UK but in Europe and world-wide.

38. We will also develop links with relevant specialist bodies such as the Centre for Public Scrutiny, the New Local Government Network and the Regional Overview and Scrutiny Network. Ultimately, whatever structures and processes are put in place, the key test of scrutiny will be that it produces outcomes which both add value to the integrated regional strategy and command the support of the wider membership.

Recommendation

39. Members are asked to consider this report and to indicate which model for exercising the regional scrutiny role should be adopted as a basis for future work.

Contact: *Melanie Laws, Chief Executive*

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‘FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD TO THE NATIONAL: POLICING OUR COMMUNITIES TOGETHER’

The Green Paper

1. The Home Office has recently published a substantial Green Paper which represents the next stage of police reform, following Sir Ronnie Flanagan’s review of policing. Key proposals include:
 - a national ‘policing pledge’ setting out key service standards;
 - a reshaping of performance management under which there will be only one top-down target for police forces, namely delivering improved levels of public confidence – other targets will be set locally to reflect local priorities;
 - strengthening the democratic link between the police and the public by introducing directly elected Crime and Policing Representatives who will sit on (and form a majority on) police authorities and chair Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships;
 - strengthening the capacity of police forces to hold their police force to account;
 - requiring improvements in productivity better procurement, better use of ICT, better deployment of the workforce;
 - greater focus on service to customers; and
 - strengthening training and development at all levels from Chief Constable to front-line officers.
2. Responses are required by 10 October. A draft response, which has been discussed with the Regional Chief Executives Group, is attached as Annex A.

Recommendations

3. Members are asked to endorse the response.

Contact: Jonathan Rew, Specialist Support Officer

‘From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together’



Response of the Association of North East Councils

Introduction

1. The Association of North East Councils is the political voice for local government in the North East. It represents all 25 local authorities in the region, throughout Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and the Tees Valley on issues of concern to them and the communities they serve. It is a cross-party organisation, with all of its members democratically elected and accountable politicians.
2. This response focuses on those aspects of the Green Paper where local authorities have a particular input to make; it does not attempt to answer all the consultation questions.

Background

3. Crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour and related issues have been amongst the highest priorities for local government in recent years, as local authorities have sought to address local people's concerns about these issues. Many authorities in this region can demonstrate real success in devising initiatives that delivered significant reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour. The key to successful initiatives has been firstly, that priorities are driven by local people, and secondly that problems are tackled in a partnership approach between the local authority (elected members and officers), its communities, the police and a wide range of stakeholders.
4. Some examples of successful crime and ASB reduction initiatives in the region are set out in Appendix 1.
5. Local authority elected members play a particularly important role in tackling crime and ASB. Because they are highly visible in the community, they are often the first people to whom local people turn when confronted by a problem of disorder. And because of their democratic mandate and role as community champion, they are well placed to bring local agencies together and broker a solution.
6. Local authority elected member representatives on police authorities bring particular strengths to this role. They combine an in-depth knowledge of the issues faced by local communities with an understanding of the means by which the local authority, and its partners, can address those issues. They are thus well placed both to support their police force, and hold it to account, in its efforts to reduce crime and the fear of crime. This is not of course to

undervalue the substantial contribution that magistrate and independent member representatives make to police authorities, but elected member representatives bring a unique perspective to this role.

Comments on the Green Paper

7. The Association finds much to welcome in the Green Paper, in particular:
 - the focus on accountability and clarity about what people can expect from the police;
 - the move away from centralised performance management towards locally set targets reflecting local policing priorities;
 - the commitment to reduce bureaucracy and improve the use of technology;
 - the strengthening of neighbourhood policing, with an emphasis on a co-ordinated approach involving integrated teams;
 - the focus on customer service based on quality and responsiveness; and
 - the proposed expansion of the statutory duties of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to include reducing re-offending, and the proposal to add probation trusts to the list of 'responsible authorities'.

8. The Association also notes the Government's intention (paragraph 7.7) to raise the capacity and influence of police authorities to hold their police forces meaningfully to account. We note, for example, that police authorities will be expected to hold their forces to account for delivering improvements in productivity (paragraph 7.11) and for deployment of the workforce to meet demand (paragraph 4.27). We welcome this commitment.

9. The Association is, however, greatly concerned by the Green Paper proposal to introduce directly elected Crime and Policing Representatives (CPRs) who will sit on (and form a majority of) the police authority, and chair the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. It is disappointing that directly elected representatives on police authorities are seen as the answer to giving local people a greater influence in the shaping and delivery of police services. The Association considers that this proposal, so far from reinforcing the generally laudable ambitions of the Green Paper, will actually detract from them. Specifically:
 - the proposal creates two parallel, and potentially conflicting, electoral mandates. As democratically elected community champions, local councillors will not be able, nor will they wish, simply to withdraw from dealing with crime and disorder issues that concern their communities. At best it will create confusion in the mind of the public as to whom they should approach, and at worst it could create conflict over local priorities;
 - local councillors already represent and advocate for local people over a range of services. The proposal for CPRs risks breaking the link between crime and disorder and related services;
 - the proposal risks undermining the successful partnership working between councils and the police that has been built up over recent years – and is evidenced in Appendix 1. Equally, the proposal that the CPR will in effect step into the chair of the Crime and Disorder Reduction

Partnership could damage the working relationships that have been established within the Partnership and reduce its effectiveness; and

- if the turnout for elections of CPRs is low, there is a risk that more extreme candidates may be elected. Further, if turnout is low the successful candidate will only have a weak mandate.

10. The Association believes that the Government should not pursue the proposal for directly elected Crime and Policing Representatives. Our view is that a police authority, with its membership of democratically elected councillors who are accountable to the community at large as well as their own local area, and independent members who bring a wealth of different experience, already has the democratic legitimacy and experience necessary to ensure the provision of an efficient and effective police service. It also has an understanding and awareness of local policing issues drawn from its position as a 'responsible authority' on Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. In addition, police authorities must have a strategic overview of a range of policing issues across the force area, such as finance and resources, equalities, performance monitoring and collaboration with other forces; it is difficult to see how Crime and Policing Representatives, with their focus on local crime and disorder issues, could provide such an overview.
11. A far better way forward would be to make better use of the skills and knowledge of local authority elected members on police authorities, building on the commitment in the Green Paper to raise the capacity and influence of police authorities to hold forces to account. The accountability of police authorities to the electorate can be strengthened by linking the democratic legitimacy of the elected members on the authority to the chair - in other words by requiring that police authorities are chaired by an elected local authority member.
12. The Association also has concerns about the proposal to create a Community Safety Fund, from the resources in the existing Basic Command Unit Fund, which will be available to Crime and Policing Representatives to address locally identified priorities. There is a risk that this may lead to funds being directed more towards issues with a high national media profile, such as knife crime, which may not always reflect local community safety priorities.
13. Finally, the Association would draw attention to the important role that Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships can play in performance improvement, given the Green Paper's emphasis on devolving the management of performance. In this region, the North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership is working with the Home Office on a pilot project looking at improving the quality of strategic assessments, and clearly there is scope for this approach to be extended into other aspects of the performance both of police forces and of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

STEM – Stronger Together in East Middlesbrough

STEM's work takes place in six neighbourhoods, all of which feature among the 3% most disadvantaged in the country. A total of 25,000 residents live in the area.

To ensure that the aspirations of local people formed the focus for its work, STEM undertook consultation with around 1,300 residents, out of which priorities were established and an action plan developed. The key priority for residents was community safety. Agreement was reached with key partners on their commitment to delivery of the action plan, and structures were put in place to enable that delivery which included:

- a linked approach between neighbourhood management operated by STEM and the day-to-day operation of the neighbourhood policing team;
- linking local residents to the new pilot Community Justice initiative from east Middlesbrough; and
- a programme of physical improvements including CCTV to tackle issues of gang nuisance, motorbike trespass and criminal damage.

The key innovation the programme has introduced is that of resident participation and influence. This has been carried through from the consultation to the development of monthly walkabouts which involve local councillors, the local policing team and council officers – housing officers, street wardens, youth workers, community engagement and anti-social behaviour enforcement officers. The practical effects of these walkabouts include better communications between agencies and residents and between professionals themselves; better identification of issues specific to the neighbourhood; ability to consider the whole range of interventions available to resolve an issue; and reassurance to local residents.

During the two-year period from June 2006 to May 2008 there has been a 26% reduction in anti-social behaviour and a 12% reduction in crime. There have also been notable reductions in anti-social behaviour at 'hotspots' which have been identified and targeted with a range of interventions.

Gateshead Community Safety Partnership – A Graded Response

Gateshead Community Safety Partnership has developed and published a graded response to tackling anti-social behaviour across the borough which is an approach aimed at tackling the root causes as opposed to dealing solely with the effects of anti-social behaviour.

The key is to work with appropriate agencies from an early stage as early interventions can considerably reduce the risk factors that may lead to anti-social behaviour. Equally, by adopting a proportionate response through engagement with those who cause anti-social behaviour, if cooperation is refused then this can be put before the Courts as evidence that all available support remedies have been tried and that legal action to stop the anti-social behaviour is therefore reasonable.

The graded response has received national recognition from the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Community Safety Partnership has recently run two campaigns to address specific issues of anti-social behaviour raised by local residents. These are:

- a campaign against anti-social motorcycling, including leaflet drops in hotspot areas and an advertising campaign on buses and in Metro stations. In cooperation with the police, illegally ridden bikes were seized and crushed and mini-moto crime was reduced by 28%; and
- a campaign against noise nuisance – a major anti-social behaviour issue within Gateshead. To coincide with National Noise Week in May 2008 a multi-agency out of hours operation was mounted with Council officers working with the Gateshead Housing Company and Northumbria Police to tackle noise complaints.

Safe Newcastle

Safe Newcastle is a partnership of organisations including Newcastle City Council, Northumbria Police, Newcastle Primary Care Trust, Northumbria Police Authority and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, as well as other public organisations, local businesses, voluntary organisations and local communities.

Safe Newcastle has undertaken a number of successful initiatives of which the following are examples:

Alcoholwatch

Residents have a concern about young people congregating in public places, drinking alcohol. To deal with this Safe Newcastle worked in partnership with Northumbria Police to set up Alcoholwatch, a scheme that tracks where under-age youngsters are buying alcohol. The scheme uses irremovable stickers, unique to each off-licence, which are stuck to bottles and cans of alcohol which are popular with under-age drinkers.

If police seize alcohol from young people or even find discarded empty bottles or cans with the stickers on, officers can trace it back to where it was bought and give advice to off-licence staff or take action where necessary.

The scheme was originally pioneered in the West End of Newcastle but due to its success in reducing youngsters drinking and with funding from Safe Newcastle it is now being rolled out citywide.

Many of the off-licences have welcomed the scheme as it allows them to work in partnership with the police to combat under-age drinking.

City-centre problem solving

Youths congregating around Eldon Square and Grey's Monument every Saturday had become an issue for shoppers and businesses in the area. A problem-solving group was set up to deal with:

- problems relating to access to local businesses because of youths congregating;
- anti-social behaviour in the area, including alcohol abuse, graffiti and litter;

- hostility between rival groups of youths; and
- safety issues relating to the sheer number of young people congregating in the area.

The problem-solving group was multi-agency and included staff from Northumbria Police, Eldon Square and various sections from the City Council. The group decided the best way forward would be to deploy staff (ward coordinators, police officers, neighbourhood services etc) to patrol the area and provide a visible presence.

This had an immediate impact on the area with a reduction in the numbers of complaints from businesses and calls to the police, less anti-social behaviour and a decrease in litter.

The problem-solving group are also looking at finding a safe environment for the young people to go to in the city centre, such as a licensed premise opening a day club. The idea is that this would be a large venue which can comfortably accommodate a large number of young people where they can listen to music and spend time together in a safe environment. There would be no alcohol served and Community Support Officers and police officers would provide a walk-through service.

Safer Sunderland Partnership – Local Multi-Agency Problem Solving Groups (LMAPS)

Early in 2007 LMAPS Groups were established across the city. This new approach was intended to provide an effective mechanism for tackling crime, fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse at the local level.

The membership of LMAPS is critical to its success. Core membership includes:

- Local Community Policing Team Inspector (Chair);
- Representatives from the City Council Safer Communities Team;
- Council Community and Cultural Services;
- Main social housing providers;
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue; and
- Sunderland Youth Offending Service.

A recent development has been the attendance of a representative ward councillor from each area committee to the corresponding LMAPS Group. This innovation has shown early positive signs with partners endorsing the presence of elected members and the local knowledge and influence their attendance brings.

Examples of some of the work of the Safer Sunderland Partnership in addressing local crime, disorder and substance misuse problems include:

Targeted Youth Engagement

In Sunderland 95 out of every 100 young people stay out of trouble. However, for the 5% of people who do get into trouble with the police, most of this is for low-level offending and most of this behaviour stops at the first point of contact through early intervention and support to prevent the escalation of offending behaviour. Targeted

Youth Engagement (TYE) has resulted in reductions of reports of youth disorder in the areas where the project has been running. TYE engages with young people and diverts them into more positive activities such as sport and leisure. There is also a range of interventions available to work with those at risk and the small numbers causing the most harm such as the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme.

Families Intervention Project

A new Families Intervention Project was set up which both challenges and supports problem families to address the causes of their anti-social behaviour. It has 12 floating support places and 5 dispersed housing places and works with around 17 families at any one time – all of whom have retained their tenancies.

Safer Homes Initiative

The Safer Homes Initiative (SHI) was launched in April 2007. In its first year it provided additional home security to over 1300 for victims of (and those vulnerable to) house burglary, domestic violence and hate crime. The impact has been that 97% of people supported by the scheme said they felt safer and levels of repeat victimisation for these crime types are the lowest they have been since the SHI began. The scheme is both reactive (for people who have been a victim) and proactive (for those at risk or who are vulnerable).

Drug Treatment

There have been some excellent improvements in drug treatment. Over the last 36 months the Partnership has maximised the resources available to it by working differently and re-providing for those parts of the treatment system which were poorly aligned to client need and not providing value for money. This has resulted in the numbers in treatment increasing from 637 in 2004/05 to 1377 in 2007/08 (provisional figures), an increase of 116%. Contributing to this has been:

- increased prescribing capacity and a single point of contact for all referrals into the drug treatment system;
- an approved preferred provider scheme under which a standing list of preferred providers has been developed to improve services for clients; and
- Sunderland Area Command has focused attention on dismantling and disrupting serious and organised crime as well as addressing street-level dealing and has made a number of significant seizures of cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, amphetamine and cannabis.