



Local Government

Results of public consultation

about

Area Action Partnerships





1,000 people take part in consultations

A message from Cllr **Simon Henig**,
Leader of Durham County Council

I'd like to thank everyone for taking part in the recent consultation on Area Action Partnerships (AAPs). All our residents' views will help us make decisions on the number and scope of partnerships we need to put in place to guide the new unitary council that comes into being in April next year. In all, over 1,000 people attended the 17 large scale events and 73 other sessions with local groups held across the county during July, August and September. Local people attended along with town, parish, district and county councillors, MPs and representatives from community and voluntary organisations. Other people were able to contribute to the debate through the Durham County Council website, libraries, public displays and the county council's Countywide magazine.

A number of the issues raised have already been discussed by the county council's Cabinet and it is hoped that a number of decisions will be formally agreed at a meeting of the full council. This meeting takes place on the 1 October at County Hall. The meeting starts at 10am and is open to the public as all full council meetings are.

Some of the issues we will be making decisions on are the number of geographic areas that AAPs are to cover and the new name of the council. If people were intending to come along to this meeting could they please contact either Bill McKibben (0191 3833507) or Michael Turnbull (0191 3833861) so arrangements can be made.

There is still a lot of work to be done before AAPs are up and running and we will be using all the information we got from the events to help us in this task.

There will be further public consultation on the role of the AAPs. We will keep you advised on progress and how you can remain involved.

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What you told us...



The first consultation event

Most of the consultation events were held in the major towns around County Durham. Many of those who attended live locally but many people also travelled from the surrounding villages. There were three key issues up for debate:

- identifying the geography for AAPs that would work best for the community and local people
- discussing the types of issues the AAPs could cover and practical ideas about how they could work
- looking at what should happen at the neighbourhood level to make AAPs work and how that could be supported.

The notes from all the major events will be available on the Durham County Council website at www.durham.gov.uk/newera

At the events, presentations from senior council staff and councillors gave an outline of what AAPs could do to focus on local action on issues such as: 'clean and green' environmental improvements; planning issues; and business support.

People at the events were very interested in shaping the AAPs and supporting work and communications between the new council and the communities it will serve. As you can imagine many important issues were discussed and there were some consistent messages across all the meetings and events. The top ten issues that people raised about the development of AAPs were:

1. Making sure that AAPs are supported by an Area Co-ordinator and other area-based staff
2. That effective communication takes place between AAPs and different organisations
3. AAPs should have a key role in identifying local priorities and local issues

4. Delegated budgets and funding should be made available to AAPs
5. The ability to shape strategies and influence the services provided sits with AAPs
6. AAPs need to have a strong role in engaging and consulting with local people
7. Links between the AAPs and the services being delivered in communities need to be strong
8. AAPs should have delegated powers and teeth to tackle local issues
9. AAPs need to work closely with town and parish councils
10. The importance of developing a culture of strong values, transparency and accountability

Views on the number of councillors

As well as discussing AAPs, people were asked to comment on the number of councillors that should represent their area.

The majority of people were in favour of at least retaining the current number of county councillors (126). This information will be sent to the Boundary Commission which is reviewing electoral arrangements in County Durham to ensure they reflect the way the new council will operate in future, and how it will engage with local communities.

What's in a name?

People were also asked to give a preference in an informal ballot for their preferred name for the new council. This is what they said:

Suggested name	Number
Durham County Council	393
County Durham Council	121
Durham Council	56
Durham Unitary Council	63
County Durham Unitary Council	92

The results of the informal ballot have been discussed by the county council's Cabinet and a formal decision will be made at the full council meeting being held on 1 October.

Identifying areas for AAPs to cover

Those people who attended the consultation events were asked to give their views on the geographical areas for AAPs that would work best for their communities. Of the 32 geographical area options identified, many were minority views or combinations of a more widely favoured option. However a number of clear views emerged about where AAPs should be based:

Teesdale based around Barnard Castle
Weardale based around Stanhope
Chester-le-Street
Newton Aycliffe
Spennymoor



Attendees giving their views

Stanley
Bishop Auckland
Crook
Ferryhill/Chilton
Consett

Some areas were not clear cut and a number of the options were given further consideration by the county council's Cabinet:

- Lanchester and its neighbouring rural villages linking with Consett or being separate
- what the Durham AAP boundary should be
- Ferryhill/Chilton having their own AAP as well as Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe
- in which AAP Shildon should be located
- whether there should be a rural corridor AAP east of Durham City including Sedgfield and the Trimdons
- should there be one, two or three AAPs for East Durham.

The results of the Cabinet discussions will be debated further at the full council meeting on 1 October.

Next steps

At the full council meeting on 1 October the new name for the council and the general areas for the AAPs should be decided and approved. Following this meeting more work will then be done on finalising the exact geography for each of the AAPs. There will also be work on the development of how AAPs will work in practice, who will be involved in them and what powers they will have. Once we have developed some ideas, we will want to talk to local people again to make sure what we are developing is right for the communities of County Durham.


If you would like more information about Area Action Partnerships, the consultation findings or the unitary council in County Durham, visit:

www.durham.gov.uk/newera
www.communities.gov.uk/corporate

For more information about future councillor representation for County Durham visit the Electoral Commissions website at:

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

If you need this information in another format such as Braille, large print, CD or talking tape, please call the number below.

 (0191) 383 3168

Comments and queries

If you have any further questions or would like more information please contact Craig Morgan, Community Development Manager, Durham County Council, Rivergreen Centre, Aykley Heads Estate, Durham DH1 5TS; email: craig.morgan@durham.gov.uk; Tel: 0191 3708748.