

Overview Committee

Partnership Review Sub Committee

Minutes

Tuesday 18 May 2010 at 2.00pm

Membership

Councillors

● absent

Joyce Bosnjak (Chair)
Chris Barnfather
Michael Bennett ●
Martin Wright
Brian Wombwell

Officers

Keith Ford – Senior Governance Officer
Matthew Garrard – Senior Scrutiny Officer
Ashley Jackson – Scrutiny Research and Information Officer
Paul Roberts – Nottinghamshire Partnership Manager

Others in attendance

Councillor John Collins – Gedling Borough Council
John Johnson – Democratic Services, Mansfield District Council
Councillor Nigel Lawrence – Rushcliffe Borough Council
Phil Lyons – Nottinghamshire Partnership
Daniel Swaine – Head of Corporate Services, Rushcliffe Borough Council
Glenn Swanwick – Executive Board Member, Nottinghamshire
County LINK
Jeremy Ward – Scrutiny Officer, Broxtowe Borough Council

1. Minutes of the last meeting held on 7 December 2009

The minutes of the last meeting, which had been circulated, were agreed as a true and accurate record.

2. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bennett.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were made.

4. Conducting the Review

Councillor Bosnjak highlighted the aims of the review and the intention to work with the District and Borough Councils in scrutinising Partnerships.

Matthew Garrard, Senior Scrutiny Officer, introduced the report and highlighted the review scope which had been agreed at the last meeting.

Councillor Nigel Lawrence of Rushcliffe Borough Council outlined the ongoing scrutiny of partnerships undertaken by that Council via its Partnerships Delivery Group, which aimed to ensure that the objectives of partnerships in the Borough, including the issue of value for money, were being delivered. This work included a review of the Crime and Disorder and Leisure Partnerships on, at least, an annual basis. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) had been scrutinised for approximately 4 years and the ongoing 'peer review' of the LSP aimed to maintain standards, improve performance and retain credibility. As the LSP was a statutory requirement, alternatives ways of working had not been explored. Councillor Lawrence felt that it would be extremely difficult to meet the Partnership Review's aim of clarifying delivery of outcomes and value for money of partnerships, although documents such as the Rushcliffe Sustainable Community Strategy helped to illustrate key achievements and future planned actions.

In response to issues raised, Councillor Lawrence and Daniel Swain clarified the following points: -

- 2 Cabinet Members were involved in the LSP but no other Councillors were directly involved in the work of the LSP or the thematic partnership groups beneath the main executive body. Some of these thematic groups were chaired by other partners. The degree of involvement and financial contribution which partners brought to the LSP varied, for example, Rushcliffe Community and Voluntary Service (CVS) undertook a lot of work but did not bring any funding. Although the LSP had previously carried some 'passengers' in the past, this was no longer the case;
- although the LSP could have felt threatened when first scrutinised, the practical approach taken, which ensured witnesses understood the process and were not kept waiting unnecessarily at meetings, helped to reduce any fear and resentment of the process. It was underlined that as Rushcliffe was a Borough Council it did not have the power to call people in to give evidence and therefore a more persuasive and inclusive approach was required. The review process, along with the partnership process overall, had evolved over time and its success could be judged by the progress which partnerships had made in that period;
- following its establishment, the Partnerships Delivery Group had sought to clarify the numbers of partnerships in the Borough. 1 or 2 had been added to the initial list of 40, with 3 or 4 partnerships since becoming defunct. An updated list had been requested for the next meeting of the Group. Councillor Lawrence hoped to improve the understanding and participation in partnerships of elected Members in general. A protocol had been developed to ensure scrutiny was restricted to significant partnerships, those for which there was a degree of dissatisfaction, or those relating to particular concerns which needed to be addressed. Of the 40 partnerships, only 7-8 justified some form of scrutiny, with 4-5 of those appropriate for the ongoing approach.

Councillor Bosnjak thanked Councillor Lawrence for his input and requested that Rushcliffe remain involved in the ongoing Partnerships Review.

5. The Nottinghamshire Partnership

Paul Roberts gave a presentation to address Members' queries about the Nottinghamshire Partnership and highlighted the following key points: -

- the purpose of the Partnership was to develop and support the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and agree and deliver the Local Area Agreement (LAA) through collaborative working. This purpose was achieved by bringing together public, private and voluntary and community sectors, co-ordinating countywide policies, plans and programmes, engaging with communities and working with Councillors;
- the Partnership's Board was Chaired by the Deputy Leader of Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) and membership consisted of the Leaders and Chief Executives of the Borough / District and County Councils, the Chairs of Nottinghamshire and Bassetlaw Primary care Trusts, the Chairs of the Police and Fire Authorities, the Chair of the Nottinghamshire Association of Voluntary Organisations (NAVO), Nottinghamshire and Derby's Chamber of Commerce representative, and the Nottinghamshire Director of the Government Office, East Midlands (GOEM);
- the Partnership's Executive had an Independent Chair (Phil Lyons) and membership consisted of NCC's Deputy Chief Executive, the Chief Executives of the Borough and District Councils, the Chief Fire Officer, the Chief Constable, the Chief Executive of RCAN (Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire), the Director of Public Health, the Chief Executive of NAVO, a Probation Director, a Jobcentreplus Manager, representatives of the East Midlands Development Agency, the Skills Funding Agency, GOEM and Sport Nottinghamshire;
- the extent of democratic engagement with the partnership was through development of the Community Strategy (including via consultation and presentations), leadership at Board Level and Membership of the Key Themed Groups, for example, the Safer Nottinghamshire Board. The difficulty of engaging approximately 300 elected Members across Nottinghamshire was highlighted. In relation to public engagement, branding was not a priority for the Partnership, as long as the public was aware of their ability and means of having an influence on the long-term strategy for the County. The Partnership did have a public website;
- the annual costs of the Partnership of £249,000 were funded by the County Council (£84,000) and other partnerships (via LAA pump priming and Central Government's performance reward grant). A report would be prepared shortly to detail the costs of the current LAA (LAA 2) which covered April 2008 – March 2011;
- achievements so far included meeting 14 stretch targets within LAA 1 (such as increased access to speedy drug treatment, more young people in employment, education or training, an increased number of

businesses supported, more parks achieving Green Flag status, increased numbers of volunteers and an increase in people who had stopped smoking). It was clarified that the stretch targets were largely informed by the views of GOEM. This performance was likely to result in £11-12.9million of reward grant, with £3.2m so far received. The Partnership's Board was the democratic body which would agree how this money would be spent, although their decisions would require County Council endorsement in line with the agreed governance arrangements. 10% of this initial funding would be kept aside for strategic issues (including meeting some of the costs of the County Council funded support staff and) and projects. Each LSP would also receive 5% via the relevant District / Borough Council. 2% would be given to each of the 7 thematic groups (including Supporting People). The Board would decide how the remaining balance of 41% would be allocated, and 25% (£830K) of that had now been allocated to the Safer Nottinghamshire Board for community safety issues;

- ongoing progress was being made with the 23 stretch targets in LAA 2 (including an increase in the number of drug users in effective treatment, a reduction in people killed or seriously injured on our roads, an increase in the number of people who have stopped smoking, an increase in vulnerable adults living independently and a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions). The Partnership Forum would be holding an annual review of partnerships at its meeting on 25 June 2010 and Mr Roberts offered an invitation to all people present at today's meeting.

During discussions, the following issues were raised: -

- with regard to smoking cessation, it was clarified that the national indicator of 4 weeks had been adopted as this was the timescale at which people were less likely to start smoking again. It was acknowledged that the figures could include people who had stopped on more than one occasion;
- the Partnership's thematic groups had been asked to rationalise the number of partnerships under each theme;
- with regard to the future, Phil Lyons stated that he would be surprised if the LAA and Comprehensive Area Assessment would continue in their current form although some method for ensuring accountability for performance would still be required. The overall Westminster view was in support of the Total Place approach;
- with regard to other ongoing or planned scrutiny work in the Districts on the issue of partnerships, Broxtowe Borough Council was about to start looking at how partnerships were formed, their performance and accountability. The late Councillor Tom Appleby had formed the Town Centre Partnership in Mansfield and this would be progressed as a pilot to look at how partnerships were developed elsewhere. The new memberships of the Mansfield District Council Scrutiny Committees would be agreed at its Annual meeting on 18 May 2010;

- in relation to the issue of partnerships continuing after they had served their purpose, Phil Lyons underlined that Mansfield Area Strategic Partnership was accredited by Central Government following annual assessments which considered membership and other arrangements. The Community Strategy would also be refreshed every 3 years. In relation to the review's aim to improve Member involvement in partnerships, Mr Lyons highlighted the poor turnout for Members' briefings and felt that there needed to be a stronger front-end role for elected Members and that better engagement would increase the relevance of Scrutiny's role. Councillor Bosnjak added that elected Members needed to have more ownership and take more control of this issue;
- Councillor Lawrence queried whether the review would also seek to gather evidence or seek co-optees from other partners, such as the Police and the Primary Care Trusts, and underlined the need for the review to be informed by the changing national political context (including the issue of whether certain partnerships continued to be statutory requirements).

Councillor Bosnjak extended an invitation to those guests present at today's meeting to attend future meetings of the review. She underlined that the review sought to strengthen the role of relevant partnerships and make them more effective rather than to discontinue all forms of partnerships.

The meeting closed at 3.18 pm.

CHAIR

Ref: m_18May10