

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

Others in attendance

Councillor Mrs Debbie Mason – Rushcliffe Borough Council
Keith Wood – Newark and Sherwood District Council

1. Minutes of the last meeting held on 18 May 2010

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 who was ill.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were made.

4. Rushcliffe Community Partnership

Councillor Mrs Debbie Mason of Rushcliffe Borough Council highlighted the following key issues about this Partnership, responding to Members queries as raised: -

- the Partnership had developed over the years, including as a result of a Peer Review undertaken in 2007. The role of the Partnership's Executive Board had become much more strategic in that time, with greater autonomy given to the six theme groups to develop and deliver their action plans;

- since 2007/08, the action plans had become more focussed, with SMART objectives aimed at issues that would not necessarily get addressed without partnership working. The theme groups were where actions were taken. These groups were largely aimed at the community and Councillors did not usually attend these meetings. The Partnership had proven to be very beneficial in terms of community engagement. The groups represented tended to change in line with current priorities;
- Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) officer representation and attendance on the theme groups was not consistent and this could reduce the effectiveness and understanding of such representatives. The difficulty of NCC officers attending theme groups for every Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was raised. NCC representation on the Executive Board was appropriate;
- due to the affluence of Rushcliffe, the theme groups were not faced with many major issues although work had been undertaken on topics such as climate change and travel. Examples of good partnership working included the work with Probation to repair old bicycles and renovate Bridgford Park. The difficulty in identifying outcomes was raised, including the issue of feedback;
- although Elected Member involvement may not have been sufficient in the past but they did usually attend the two conferences held each year as well as Partnership events that were organised in parishes. Members were also kept informed of Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) issues via the 'Members Matters' newsletter. Although NCC Members from the Rushcliffe Division were invited to relevant Partnership meetings, attendance was understandably variable;
- the costs of the Partnership were largely financed by Rushcliffe Borough Council, with the facilitator post part-funded by Rushcliffe Borough Council (£10,000), NCC (£9,000 – reduced from £10,000) and NHS Nottinghamshire County. The Police and Rushcliffe Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) contributed in officer time. Rushcliffe did not receive regeneration money from Central Government and therefore the Partnership had been reliant upon support from each of the partners in the past, as opposed to formal financial contributions. The planned Local Area Agreement Reward Grant allocation of 5% to each LSP would be utilised by the Board to commission projects to meet its primary objectives, addressing issues such as climate change, the aging population in the area and the local economy. The lack of formalised financial contributions prevented any sort of confrontation developing amongst partners and also ensured that groups sought to be involved in the Partnership out of genuine interest rather than for financial gain;
- events such as the annual Community Awards Ceremony, Kite Festival and 10km Run had helped to strengthen partnership working and increase community involvement. The Partnership did not worry about promoting itself and concentrated instead on achieving its aims;
- the Partnership's greatest successes included the work undertaken on climate change, with the partnership approach helping to deliver better

outcomes and providing a forum for partners to make decisions together;

- relevant elected Members were consulted as appropriate but the lack of direct Member involvement in the majority of the theme groups was felt to be advantageous and helpful in ensuring the continued community approach to addressing issues. Member involvement, in order to champion issues, was also enabled through the Executive Board and the Partnerships Delivery Group and via the publication of minutes and relevant documents on the internet.

5. Newark and Sherwood Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Keith Wood, Community Planning Manager of Newark and Sherwood District Council, circulated copies of an information report in response to the review, organisational structure and leadership charts, the Annual Review for 2008/09 and the Financial Report for 2010.

He highlighted the following key issues about this Partnership, responding to Members queries as raised: -

- this LSP had some elements in common with the Rushcliffe Community Partnership but also some differences in approach, reflecting the differing needs of the two communities;
- not many Councils, regardless of their politics, wholeheartedly supported LSPs upon their introduction. District Councils were seen as the leaders of the process at first and the financial contribution to Newark and Sherwood LSP continued to reflect this, with NCC contributing £9,000 and Newark and Sherwood District Council's providing £53,500. Increased political involvement began to be developed in 2007, with a number of District Councils requesting increased input from NCC;
- as with other LSPs, this one had continued to evolve over time and in light of Peer Review recommendations, with the membership of the Board reducing to a more appropriate level;
- progress reports were taken to the District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis, ensuring increased democratic involvement. Transparency was also achieved through the publication of minutes on the Council's website. Members were also involved in some specific issue groups reporting to the LSP on matters such as the growth point and LDF;
- the Leaders of each of the 6 theme groups were members of the Management Group. The Shared Information Network was led by NHS Nottinghamshire and aimed to pull together and share, as appropriate, statistical information collected by the various partners. The 41 focus groups which operated below the theme groups had already existed or would continue to do so regardless of the LSP. These autonomous groups offered the main link to the community and undertook the majority of the work of the LSP. Although this organisational structure was not perfect and continued to develop, it had enabled the

development of a database of 170 key practitioners covering the various themes and this was utilised to continually improve networking and support for LSP events. This networking, although difficult to quantify, was one of the key benefits of the LSP;

- the Annual Review was used as a means of communicating the achievements of the theme groups. Although much of this work would likely have been undertaken regardless, another benefit of the LSP was that it promoted informal partnerships and encouraged and helped to develop community groups and their good practice wherever beneficial;
- with regard to the promotion of LSPs, Mr Wood highlighted how the Community Awards Ceremony in Rushcliffe, which had previously been organised solely by Rushcliffe Borough Council, had become a bigger event when the Council allowed this to be promoted under the banner of Rushcliffe Community Partnership. Mr Wood agreed with Councillor Bosnjak that sometimes LSPs could claim credit for achievements that would have been undertaken by an organisation on its own anyway, and felt that the LSP badge should only be applied where other partners had made a contribution;
- LSPs need to be about community empowerment and building capacity. Although the structure in Newark and Sherwood was geared towards the District Council this was likely to change in time, with various organisations now leading the theme groups. These groups had been established in response to the community priorities highlighted in the Community Strategy process. It was important that LSPs were open to all, although it was not necessary for all partners to be involved in all the work of the LSP. Business Sector involvement was now stronger than previously. Mr Wood was now contacted by people asking to be involved in the work of the LSP whereas previously he has having to promote involvement;
- elected Member involvement was enabled through the District Council's Leader and Deputy Leader being members of the LSP's Board. Councillor Keith Girling represented NCC on the Board and was extremely committed and active. Although the Board involved health debate it had never required a formal vote on an issue as yet, usually arriving at a consensus through discussions. Mr Wood clarified that even when the District Councils and County Council were of the same political persuasion there could still be differences of opinion in light of the varying priorities of the Councils. However, many of the issues being discussed were not of a political nature;
- a Partnership toolkit had been adopted in 2008, which included risk assessments and sustainability issues;
- following the recent Forward Planning Day, the Board was reconsidering its approach in light of the current economic situation, recognising that 'no change' was not an option and that bureaucracy needed to be reduced. The theme groups would be asked to review their practice in light of this, looking at issues such as frequency and venues of meetings,

and the existing consistency of approach was likely to be replaced with greater flexibility instead;

- the Board had also agreed to take a more focussed approach on priorities and it was likely that the LAA reward grant allocation would be utilised to commission work to achieve these priorities;
- as with Rushcliffe, NCC officer representation on the theme groups was still not appropriate, with attendance from relevant practitioners, rather than corporate officers, needed to enable effective discussions of specific agenda items. Decision-making powers were not required these groups sought to form opinions to influence and inform the Board's decisions;
- most of the focus groups did not have secretarial support of formal records, with the Chairs of these groups feeding back to the theme groups. Mr Wood's role included intervening in these groups and offering support, encouragement and advice when needed;
- Mr Wood felt that there was growing support for partnership working and greater recognition of its ever-increasing importance. Councillor Mason highlighted the importance of making all partners accountable for contributing towards the partnerships;
- it was clarified that the District Council did not employ somebody to support grant-funding bids and to signpost as appropriate. The Council for Voluntary Services had previously undertaken this role, although the funding for that post had recently come to an end. The Board was looking at ways of strengthening capacity in the voluntary sector and it was hoped that this previous post could be funded again and expanded, particularly with regard to harnessing the social responsibility commitments of private businesses.

Councillor Bosnjak reported that the NCC Cabinet would be approving the LAA Reward Grant allocations at its meeting on 9 June 2010 and the payments would be paid to seven District and Borough Councils, as the accountable bodies, shortly afterwards. She thanked Councillor Mason and Mr Wood for their input and agreed to feedback concerns about consistency of NCC officer representation on the theme groups.

6. Broxtowe Borough Partnership

Due to a recent change to the charring arrangements of Broxtowe Borough Partnership, this item was deferred to a future meeting.

7. Review Programme

The Review Programme was noted.

The meeting closed at 4.03 pm.

CHAIR

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