

MINUTES



Date: 5 September 2008
Time: 9.30am
Venue: Weaver Room, Winsford Civic Hall, Winsford.

PRESENT: Wendy Wright - Chair

District and District LSP Representatives:

Chester:	Chris Hardy, Managing Director
Congleton:	
Crewe & Nantwich:	
Ellesmere Port & Neston:	
Macclesfield:	Vivienne Horton, Chief Executive
Vale Royal:	Anne Bingham-Holmes, Chief Executive

Other CCP Member Body Representatives:

Cheshire Safer Stronger Communities Partnership:	Mark Watson, representing the Chief Constable
Cheshire Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership:	Joan Feenan, Vice Chair
Cheshire & Warrington Economic Alliance:	
Sustainable Cheshire Forum:	Chris Mahon, Chair
Cheshire Healthier Communities Group:	Tim Mann, representing John Weeks, Chair
Cheshire & Warrington Cultural Consortium:	
Cheshire & Warrington Rural Partnership:	David Rowlands, Chair
Cheshire County Council	
Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service:	Mark Cashin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Health / PCTs	
Cheshire CABx:	Paul Nicholls
Cheshire CVSs:	Wendy Gjerstad

Support Staff:

Alison Armstrong, Lisa Green and Robbie Taylor (Cheshire County Council), Sean Daly (Ellesmere Port and Neston), Alison Hyde (Congleton), Kirstie Hercules (Crewe and Nantwich), Clare Babbs (Chester City Council) and Cathy Boyd (Vale Royal).

Visitors:

Greg Burke, Government Office for the North West.

Peter Forrester, Audit Commission.

Jamie Matthews, Cheshire County Council.

Jennie Lees, Cheshire County Council.

Apologies:

Paul Ancell, Helen Bellairs, John Bowler, Jan Burns, Brenda Harvey, Tim Jackson, Gordon McGuinness, Robin Norrie, Jeremy Taylor, John Weeks and John Wilbraham.

61.0 WELCOME MESSAGE

Anne Bingham-Holmes welcomed the Partnership to Vale Royal as representative of the Chair of Vale Royal LSP.

62.0 INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Wendy Wright welcomed partners to the meeting and introductions were made.

63.0 CHESHIRE LAA UPDATE

Following the Partnership request at its last meeting, a combined report was prepared and presented on an evaluation of the original LAA and progress to date on implementing the new Agreement.

The key lessons to be learnt from the earlier experience included:

- having more robust baselines and targets across all indicators;
- developing interim milestones against which in-year performance and progress can be measured;
- streamlining of performance management systems both across the partnership and internally;
- having more robust data quality controls (including more systematic capturing of actions); and
- having more localised targets according to needs and priorities (including targeting interventions in specific communities);

In order to respond to the challenge of ensuring more effective performance management procedures are in place for the new Agreement, a standardised delivery plan template had been produced and shared with all lead organisations responsible for individual LAA indicators. However, the pro-forma had not been consistently or thoroughly completed by partners in the requested proceeding two month period. Partners were provided with an additional checklist outlining where gaps still exist and an outline of the CLG/GONW review process. Additionally, partners were provided with an indication of

when forthcoming milestones and completion dates regarding outturn performance reporting and the severance process of the Agreement will occur.

A further briefing paper was tabled on the current consultation on the LAA Performance Reward Grant. The proposed scheme offers a maximum Performance Reward Grant, should all targets be achieved, based on 0.54% of the net budgets of the seven current Cheshire local authorities. This would provide provisional maximum PRG allocations of £2.05m and £2.12m for the Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East areas respectively. The proposed model is different to that previously used for the calculation of Local Public Service Agreement Performance Reward Grant. This model had a 60% minimum stretch target but once achieved, reward was in direct proportion to the stretch achieved, i.e. 80% stretch = 80% reward grant. The proposed LAA model would only pay 50% reward grant for 80% achievement, i.e. 80% falls halfway between the 60% start point and 100% maximum.

Initial comments upon the reward consultation were of disappointment at the level of potential reward and how difficult it may be to achieve challenging targets – it seemed to act as more of a disincentive against setting demanding targets around priorities. It is unclear how existing countywide year one delivery would be assessed to determine the reward payment after year three to the new Councils. The response to the consultation needs to include the new local authorities and LSPs, as they will inherit any reward. There were a couple of LAA indicators where data lags exist and, as such, successful performance will be unable to be evaluated as the evidence needed will be available in some instances months after financial year end.

The Partnership Chair reported that a letter from the Chief Executive of the NWDA had been received outlining the Agency's commitment to its responsibilities for LAA involvement under the new duties. It was reported that there is some uncertainty on which organisation(s) is responsible for NI 171 but further discussions are planned and a resolution expected in the near future. Greg Burke stated that he anticipated the LAA review process expected during November/December would account for managing the process of LGR transition.

AGREED

1. The Chairs of the Thematic Partnership ensure and support the immediate completion of the outstanding LAA delivery plans, by ensuring all named partners undertake their performance management responsibilities.
2. The Communities of Cheshire Partnership consider any future actions it wishes to take in response to the CLG quality assurance requirements.

3. Officers prepare a response to the consultation of the LAA Performance Reward Grant on behalf of the Communities of Cheshire Partnership and the new Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East Councils.
4. The revised LAA Performance Management Framework is agreed by the co-ordinating officers of the Thematic Partnerships on behalf of the Communities of Cheshire Partnership.

64.0 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT WHITE PAPER

A presentation was provided on the key aspects of the new White Paper on Community Empowerment. The Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill 2008 contains, three key new duties:

- Duty to promote democracy
- Duty to respond to petitions
- Duty to involve – by extension

Three new powers:

- Voting incentives
- Overview and scrutiny
- Remote voting at council meetings

A number of new rules concerning:

- Local councils
- Elected mayors
- Scrutiny of public officials
- Local Government Ombudsman
- Political restrictions

Partners were then advised of the RIEP (Regional Improvement and Efficiency Programme) funding which will be invested to provide a number of workshops for a range of key stakeholders (newly Elected Members, professional and Third Sector representatives) to deliver capacity building surrounding the new duties and powers. Outputs of the local RIEP programme include skills development on participatory budgeting, the transfer of community assets and local action planning.

The White Paper is consistent with the direction the new Policing Green Paper, for example there will be a new 'policing pledge'. There were no details available from the pathfinder areas, who are piloting work and partners expressed some concern that to successfully meet the challenges outlined in the White Paper, a 'cultural' shift will need to be made and could take some time.

65.0 COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT

Peter Forrester, the Audit Commission's Cheshire (and Merseyside) CAA (Comprehensive Area Assessment) lead, presented an updated briefing on the second round of consultation on the new assessment process – Partners were presented on the first draft earlier in January. CAA is to be implemented in November 2009, for both of the new Councils and LSPs and will examine how the new organisations have developed. The latest proposals suggest there will be an area and an organisational assessment, based on the use of resources. There will be three key lines of enquiry addressing the following questions:

- How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
- How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
- What are the prospects for future improvement?

The focus will be on the priority outcomes targeted with in the LAA and Sustainable Community Strategy, for example the following priorities will be assessed:

- How safe is the area?
- How healthy and well supported are people?
- How environmentally sustainable is the area?
- How strong is the local economy?
- How well is inequality being addressed?
- How strong and cohesive are local communities?
- How good is the well-being of children and young people?

A system of web-based reporting will be introduced so best practice on priorities is accessible across the country; there is pilot of the assessment underway in Stockport and findings should be available from the end of the month and the consultation on the second wave of CAA proposals closes on 20th October.

Partners expressed concern about the initial roll out of the assessment and the proposed awarding of red and green flags (and their aggregation in to a virtual league table of flags) and the impact on the new Councils and LSPs. For example, the current national economic climate affects the local priority of providing affordable housing, so a red flag on this priority could lead to a red flag being awarded to an organisation responsible to housing provision. The Audit Commission will inspect the local authorities and the Fire and Rescue Service and HMIC will lead on APACs. It was confirmed that the local priorities will be set/judged by analysis of local and national data sets, Place Survey results and national performance framework (198 indicators) etc. It could be that the focus of inspection for parts of Cheshire, will be to examine inequalities across an area, where familiar pockets of deprivation and gaps have been masked in earlier CPA (Comprehensive Area Assessment) analysis.

ACTION

The Partnership agreed to make a formal response to the consultation and requested officers draw together a paper on behalf of the CCP.

66.0 CHESHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

A paper on the development of the latest Cheshire Local Transport Plan's (LTP) progress report was provided for Partners to consider; the report will be submitted to the Government Office in October and then circulated further. The impact of LGR will be significant on the LTP and an approved LTP will be presented to the new Shadow Councils for policy development and induction, following Cheshire County Council Executive approval in the coming weeks. Some £177 million had been invested through the Plan in the last two years and number of major projects had been successfully completed.

The presentation was followed by a discussion and a number of points were made: firstly to ensure the connections between the LTP and the new sustainable community strategies, Local Development Frameworks and corporate plans are effective and robust. A suggestion that the progress report is risk assessed against the leading questions surrounding local priorities, which will form the basis of CAA inspection.

More detail on LTP issues is provided on the website. (The appendix has now been circulated electronically).

AGREED

1. Partners noted the progress and achievements made to date on implementing the LTP.
2. Partners' comments were received and were invited to respond further on the details of the report outlined in the appendix paper to Jamie Matthews directly.

67.0 ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING CONSULTATION

The Partnership received a presentation on the current accessibility planning consultation exercise. The County Council are required to consider accessibility to key services by developing an Accessibility Strategy, as part of the Local Transport Plan (2006 - 2011). Following an independent review of the strategy, a number of areas for improvement have been identified. Three proposed priority areas have been identified for further analysis and consultation:

- Access to key services from rural areas
- Access to health
- Access to employment

Partners were invited to contribute to the consultation exercise, if they had not already done so, as an action plan will be developed following the twelve week period of consultation. The consultation exercise closes on Friday 19th September. It is anticipated the Accessibility Strategy will be presented to the Shadow Councils in the coming months, as it is they who ultimately endorse the approved actions.

AGREED

1. The Communities of Cheshire Partnership further comment upon the proposals and respond directly to Jennie Lees.
2. The Partnership considers how the Strategy be implemented: how shared goals and priorities be delivered through partnership working arrangements.

68.0 NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Partners were advised that some of the LPSA (Local Public Service Agreement) 2007/08 performance results were still to be determined and it was not possible to complete the outstanding original LAA outturn report for 2007/08. It is hoped that the information will be available in time for the final performance report to be completed and presented to the Partnership, at the meeting scheduled for 7 November 2008.

The community cohesion report to accompany the presentation by Prof. Richard Tomlins was not yet available and will be circulated to Partners and placed on the partnership web-pages in the near future.

69.0 LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

The Partnership was provided and verbal briefings on the overall re-organisation work for both of the new Authorities and then specifically surrounding the partnership work streams.

In CW&C (Cheshire West and Chester), the new Chief Executive will commence work on 1 October and the second tier of management recruitment is under way. There are six departments in the new Council's structure and the LSP will be based in the office of the Chief Executive. The consultation on the area and neighbourhood working proposals closes on 30 September and the Shadow Executive will receive a report on the exercise in mid-October. An interim sustainable community strategy has been completed and a second partnership engagement event is planned for 22 October to discuss a new LSP framework for CW&C and feedback on Area Programme Boards. A Third Sector Assembly has been established.

The CE (Cheshire East) Council Chief Executive will be in position on 6 October and second tier management will be appointed week

commencing 15 September.* The departmental structure is remaining with the three sections outlined in the original bid. There will be a by-election in the ward of Knutsford on 9 October and on 2 October, CLG Minister John Healey will be visiting both new Council's to review progress to date. A report on proposed area and neighbourhood working model will be presented to the Shadow Cabinet in October and an interim community strategy will be presented in mid-September.

Partners then had a brief discussion on the future of the existing Partnership framework and assessed when it may be necessary to move into ways of working in the new Council areas. The Partnership agreed it has experience, knowledge and expertise which can be used to assist and influence the new local authorities and LSPs. In the meantime, it would be helpful to share papers from the CCP and Governance Board with the new Chief Executives.

** John Weeks has been appointed Director of the People Department and Tom McCabe has been appointed Director of the Places Department (16/09/2008).*

NOTE:

Date of the next meeting: **9.30am on Friday 7th November, Ellesmere Port and Neston.**

Signed (Chair):

Date: