
Improving Partnership Working in Cheshire – Work Programme 2007/08

Introduction

In December 2006, the Partnership received a report outlining the key activities and decisions to be undertaken by the Communities of Cheshire Partnership throughout 2007 with a view to establishing a work programme for the Partnership for the coming year. The report identified key work areas in relation to partnership development, communications and performance management as well as core activity in relation to the delivery of the Cheshire Local Area Agreement.

Many of the areas identified were reinforced in the recommendations arising out of the Audit Commission's project – "Improving Partnership Working in Cheshire" – which were presented to the Partnership in February and revisited at the last meeting. When collated together, a long list of 18 work programmes emerged (see Appendix A) in addition to the day-to-day administrative and support needs of the Partnership and ad hoc activity which is likely to arise over the year.

Recent Progress

As a result of the last meeting, a small sub-group of the Partnership was convened to begin to explore the Audit Commission's recommendations. The Improvement Sub-Group, comprising the Chairs of the six district Local Strategic Partnerships, Chris Mahon, Wendy Wright, Roger Simpson, David Rowlands, Michael Metcalfe and Paul Ancell, met for the first time (though not all partners were able to be present) on 11 May.

The Sub-Group explored the 'blockages' that exist in moving the improvement agenda forward and discussed aspects of the recommendations - particularly those in relation to capacity, support needs, communications and information sharing - at length. In conclusion, the Sub-Group agreed to work with the LAA Officer Group in identifying the key activities to be undertaken over the next twelve months and the resources needed to deliver these. This would include officer time as well as any financial support and would help inform decisions in relation to the use of the second homes taxation funding.

On 17 May, members of the Improvement Sub-Group joined the LAA Officer Group in undertaking a risk assessment of each of the 18 proposed work programmes with a view to prioritising those requiring more immediate action. The analysis explored the risks associated with deferring the activity beyond the next twelve months by assessing the likelihood of the risk occurring against its impact. Appendix A also includes the outcome of the exercise from which the following shortlist of level 1 priorities emerged:

1. Determine new and/or revised LAA outcomes (including public, VCFS and partner consultation, engagement and involvement).
2. Develop strategic approach to commissioning for LAA delivery.
3. Consolidate arrangements for engagement with and integration of the third sector in the Cheshire Partnerships Framework, especially at countywide level.
4. Review the effectiveness of the structures and framework in place and establish realistic and coherent support arrangements to underpin this.
5. Embed the LAA Performance Management framework across the partnership.
6. Map out the information gathering / community consultation routines of partners with a view to greater collaboration.

Half of these priorities (3, 4 and 6 above) reflect some, but not all, of the Audit Commission's recommendations. In addition, some have been identified for action later in the year subject to external factors, e.g. further guidance on the future arrangements for LAAs, a decision on any future Local Government Re-organisation in Cheshire, etc.

Next Steps

Before further scoping and development work is undertaken by the Improvement Sub-Group / LAA Officers Group, the endorsement of and commitment to these priorities by the Partnership is requested.

Proposal

It is therefore proposed that the Partnership:

- (1) discuss, comment upon and endorse the activities shortlisted for immediate action;
- (2) identify a lead partner organisation or group to develop a more detailed project / programme plan for each of the activities listed;
- (3) commit staff resources from their respective organisations, where appropriate, to undertake this work; and
- (4) receive an update on the project / programme planning at their next meeting.

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COMMUNITIES OF CHESHIRE PARTNERSHIP WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08 – KEY TASKS / ACTIVITIES

| Key Task / Activity | Priority Level | Comments |
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| 1. Finalise the new Cheshire Sustainable Community Strategy underpinned by district Community Plans and associated thematic partnership plans | 3 | Specific issue for Cheshire County Council due to statutory duty. Not perceived as a priority for the Partnership as overtaken by Local Area Agreement development underpinned by district community plans / strategies and other key strategies, e.g. Children & Young People's Plan, Local Transport Plan, etc. Suggested that: (i) simplified CSCS be completed by CCC and brought back to CCP for endorsement later in the year; and (ii) CCP / Cheshire LAA Group map community and associated planning timescales with a view to improving co-ordination |
| 2. Determine new and/or revised LAA outcomes | 1 | High priority. Work can begin on assessing current LAA outcomes against latest priorities for action as identified within revised district community plans / strategies and other key strategies in advance of further Govt guidance and publication of new national indicator set. Suggest project / programme plan incorporates 3 below. |
| 3. Develop and carry out consultation / engagement / involvement strategy for LAA Year 1 refresh / 2 nd generation | 1 | High priority. Planning can begin immediately. Suggest that activity included in project / programme plan of 2 above. |
| 4. Carry out NWRA Integrated Appraisal of LAA | 3 | Important but not essential. |

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| 5. Carry out LAA Equality Impact Assessment | 1 | High priority. Statutory duty but already being addressed with the LAA. |
| 6. Prepare for Comprehensive Area Assessment | 3 | Important but not essential over the next twelve months. Need to tie into planned work of the local authorities. |
| 7. Increase understanding of community cohesion issues in the county (Audit Commission) | 1 | High priority but already being addressed with the LAA. |
| 8. Develop strategic approach to commissioning for LAA delivery | 1 | High priority. Important to co-ordinate approaches across the blocks, particularly in relation to cross-cutting issues. Work needs to begin a.s.a.p. to support LAA delivery. |
| 9. Consolidate arrangements for engagement with the and integration of the Third Sector in the Cheshire Partnerships Framework, especially at countywide level (Audit Commission) | 1 | High priority. Work already well underway but needs consolidation to ensure long term sustainability. |
| 10. Establish realistic and coherent support arrangements to underpin the work of the Cheshire Partnerships Framework (Audit Commission) | 1 | High priority but dependant upon 11 below and LGR announcement expected at the end of July. Suggested that, in the interim, specific capacity issues be dealt with as and when required. Prioritisation of key activities to more manageable number should help. Suggested that: (i) all partners re-consider and commit to re-aligning resources (staff time and funding) possibly available; and (ii) activity is picked up in the autumn as part of the project / programme plan for 11 below. |
| 11. Review the effectiveness of the structures and framework in place (Audit Commission) | 1 | High priority but needs to be measured against achievement of LAA outcomes. Could also be influenced by the LGR announcement expected at the end of July. CCP agreed at April meeting to |

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| | | defer review until the autumn. Suggested that project / programme plan incorporates 10 above. |
| 12. Embed LAA Performance Management framework | 1 | High priority in order to measure success and report on progress to partners and Govt. |
| 13. Establish development programme for partnership work at all levels from Governance board to operational on the ground delivery (Audit Commission) | 2 | Important but not essential at this time. Will be influenced by 11 above. |
| 14. Develop of Funding Strategy to deliver LAA / CSCS outcomes | 3 | Important but not achievable within the next twelve months. Timing is vital but suggested that outline thinking be done to generate Governance Board discussion. |
| 15. Further develop Communications Strategy / Communication Action Plan (Audit Commission) | 2 | Important but not as significant as other activities. Suggested that all partners are reminded of the importance of effective communications within and across partnership and organisational networks. All partners have a responsibility here. |
| 16. CCP / Governance Board Conference | 2 | Could be useful mechanism in the latter half of the year to inform the review of the Framework and the LAA 'refresh' and report to a wider audience on progress but not essential. |
| 17. Map out information gathering / community consultation routines of partners with a view to greater collaboration (Audit Commission) | 1 | High priority for LAA performance management and refresh – possible 'early win'. Should also support item 3. |
| 18. Create a Best Practice Forum (Audit Commission) | 3 | Important but not an immediate priority. |