

**Minutes of the Cheshire Governance Board
25 January 2008**

Fred Flint Room, Congleton Borough Council, Westfields, Sandbach

PRESENT:

Cllr Paul Findlow (Chairman)	Cheshire County Council
Moira Chapman	Cheshire Police Authority
Liz Davis	Cheshire & Warrington Learning & Skills Council
Cllr Roland Domleo	Congleton Borough Council
Cllr Wesley Fitzgerald	Macclesfield Borough Council
Cllr Les Ford	Vale Royal Borough Council
Cllr Tony Hooton	Cheshire Fire Authority
Cllr Margaret P Parker	Chester City Council
Roger Parkin	Cheshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Brian Silvester	Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council
Jane Trevor	Jobcentre Plus

IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Ancell	Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council
Alison Armstrong	Cheshire County Council
Anne Bingham-Holmes	Vale Royal Borough Council
Mark Cashin	Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service
Glyn Chambers	Congleton Borough Council
Sean Daley	Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council
Lisa Green	Cheshire County Council
Chris Hardy	Chester City Council
Brenda Harvey	Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council
Kirstie Hercules	Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council
Vivienne Horton	Macclesfield Borough Council
Ann Riley	Audit Commission
Jeremy Taylor	Cheshire County Council

APOLOGIES:

Greg Burke	Government Office for the North West
John Church	Cheshire West PCT
Cllr Justin Madders	Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council
Pauline Ong	Central & Eastern Cheshire PCT
Gwen Scott	Environment Agency
Wendy Wright	Communities of Cheshire Partnership

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & NOTES OF LAST MEETING

The Chairman, Cllr Paul Findlow, opened the meeting by welcoming members. General introductions were made of all those present.

AGREED: that the notes of the meeting held on 30 November 2007 be approved.

2 COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT – A JOINT CONSULTATION BY THE AUDIT COMMISSION, COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTION, HEALTHCARE COMMISSION, HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY, HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS, HM INSPECTORATE OF PROBATION AND OFSTED

Ann Riley, Audit Commission, updated partners on the proposals for the introduction of Comprehensive Area Assessment to replace Comprehensive Performance Assessment as the performance management regime for local areas to be introduced from 2009. A joint consultation on the new approach, particularly the new context for CAA and the enhanced role of Local Strategic Partnerships in the process, was due to end on 15 February 2008. In essence, the CAA:

- represents a change from individual inspectorates and inspection processes into a single joint inspection approach;
- will focus on the place and priorities for the local area, examining the role of individual partners in addressing those priorities and the contribution they make;
- will take a prospective look forward rather than a retrospective view of performance.

Partners expressed concern at:

1. the unrealistic timetable for the introduction of CAA in Cheshire against the background of local government re-organisation. It was noted that the assessment for the area should be firmly based on the Sustainable Community Strategy developed through the Local Strategic Partnership. This would take time to re-align and embed for the new unitary authority areas;
2. the lack of clear accountability within the new approach with measurement being made across a range of individual components;
3. the potential difficulty of assessing experimental programmes taking into account the inherent risks of innovation and new ways of working;
4. the commitment of the other inspectorates to the new joint approach and potential overlap if this fails; and
5. the attitude and responsiveness of non local authority partners to the new approach and any subsequent power of enforcement.

In response, it was noted that the concerns of the Board should be reported to the respective Relationship Managers who would then feed back to the Audit Commission. It was also suggested that Cheshire's MPs be lobbied should Cheshire's unique circumstances not be taken into account as the process and timetable for introduction evolves. A challenge of the CAA process would be the need for an iterative rather than formulaic approach to inspection in order to fully appreciate the improvement journey. The Audit Commission would play a 'gatekeeper' role which would, it was hoped, result in a reduction in inspections though this was subject to ongoing debate. The initial lever for partner engagement would be the new 'duty to co-operate' introduced under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act. In addition, all partners should 'have regard' to targets set through the Local Area Agreement and would need to reflect this in their business plans. Other inspectorates

would pick this up as part of their inspection processes and this would subsequently feed into the CAA.

AGREED: that further updates on the new Comprehensive Area Assessment process be brought to the Governance Board when appropriate.

3 CHESHIRE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT 2007/10 – THREE QUARTER YEAR REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE (EXCEPTION REPORT)

Alison Armstrong, Cheshire LAA Group, presented the three quarter year review of performance against the current Cheshire Local Area Agreement. It was noted that this was an exception report highlighting changes in performance to that reported at mid-year.

A slight improvement on the mid-year position was reported with three of the 54 sub-outcomes flagged as '↓' (under performing) and 22 flagged as '↑' (on target or completed). However, whilst the overall picture continued to be one of satisfactory progress in most areas, there remained some issues in relation to the quality of data that is currently available to fully assess performance.

Financially, forecast spend remained substantially in line with budget with all partners continuing to ensure that monies are fully utilised, particularly capital spend where any underspend in excess of 5% of the total capital allocation would need to be returned to DCLG.

AGREED: that the progress made by Communities of Cheshire Partnership in the delivery of the Cheshire Local Area Agreement 2007-10 at three quarter year be noted.

4 ARSON ISSUES IN CHESHIRE

Mark Cashin, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, presented this paper to raise awareness of arson issues across Cheshire and seek the inclusion of NI33 – Arson incidents – in the new Local Area Agreement as a direct, output measure of anti-social behaviour. It was noted that the only other ASB related indicators within the new National Indicator Set were 'perception' based and whilst there was some value in measuring perceptions, this needed to be balanced against hard facts and evidence.

Whilst partners recognised the connection between arson and ASB, it was noted that community concerns hinged more on noise and nuisance and it was, therefore, important to find a better way of reflecting this within the LAA.

It was suggested that the RESPECT Action Plans being developed through the six Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships could provide useful measures as a basis for local indicators. However, it also noted that ASB could continue to be tackled outside of the LAA if necessary.

AGREED: that

- (i) **the six district based CDRPS be asked to review their action plans with regard to arson reduction as a new priority for the Communities of Cheshire Partnership;**
- (ii) **the current ASB indicators being used by the six CDRPs be brought into a single document for consideration at the next Governance Board meeting.**

5 INTERIM CHESHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LAA 2008/09: NEW NATIONAL INDICATOR SET, NEW LAA PRIORITIES AND PROPOSED INDICATORS

Lisa Green, Cheshire LAA Group, updated partners on the content of the draft interim Cheshire Sustainable Community Strategy and changes that had been made following consideration by the Communities of Cheshire Partnership on 9 January. These included:

- the incorporation of mental health within a wider inequalities priority;
- a new priority focusing on environmental quality and street scene; and
- a stronger focus on economic development.

It was suggested that, in the light of the previous discussion, crime and anti-social behaviour be drawn out as a separate priority within the Strategy. It was also suggested that the priority relating to the ageing population needed to be strengthened to reinforce other connections, e.g. economic development.

The Board also considered the latest long list of 'new style' LAA indicators. Local (non designated) indicators would be developed in place of those national ones considered impractical for measurement within the short-term life of the LAA. Partners supported the inclusion of NI112, NI168 and NI169 alongside alcohol and anti-social behaviour measures.

6 CREATING STRONG, SAFE AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES – STATUTORY GUIDANCE: DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION (HM GOVERNMENT)

Partners were reminded of the current national consultation seeking views on the draft Statutory Guidance: Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities being developed by the Government following enactment of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act. All were encouraged to respond to the consultation – covering LSPs, Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements – by Tuesday 12 February 2008.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

AGREED: That the next meeting of the Cheshire Governance Board be held in Halton at 1.15pm on 29 February 2008.