



Partnership Bulletin

Introduction

Welcome to this first regular bulletin to the Cheshire West and Chester Partnership. The intention is to keep you abreast of developments and this will be circulated electronically every four weeks to all individuals and organisations associated with the current Local Strategic Partnerships in the new Authority area.

This issue covers:

- Feedback and emerging themes from the recent Partnership event.
- Details of the proposed Partnership Framework
- The Local Area Agreement Review and refresh
- The Sustainable Community Strategy
- Taking the Vision Forward.

1. Partnership Event

Over 100 individuals attended the recent Partnership Event held in Ellesmere Port on 8th December 2008. This was an opportunity to meet Steve Robinson, the new Chief Executive for Cheshire West and Chester and consider the new arrangements for Partnership working from April 2009. Presentations were received on Partnership Working (Steve Robinson), the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Wendy Meredith, Western Cheshire PCT Director of Public Health), Strategic Assessment (Ewan McHenry, VRBC Community Safety Manager) and the emerging Third Sector Assembly (Jane Staley, Exec. Director Groundwork Cheshire). This was followed by a facilitated discussion centred around the proposed Partnership Framework (See below) and on each of the presentation areas. Appendix A contains a summary of the key issues raised during these discussions and this has helped to shape a consensus on the way forward.

2. Proposed Partnership Framework

The framework below represents the various elements of the partnerships structure in the Cheshire West and Chester Authority area and, in particular, the important communications and linkages that we will need to make across the whole breadth of these arrangements.

Cheshire West and Chester Partnership Framework

Local Strategic Partnership

Sustainable Community Strategy

Including supporting strategies e.g. Local Development Framework

Children's Trust

Safer & Stronger Communities

Business & Enterprise

Health & Well-being

Priority programmes and strategies

Area Partnership Board

Area Partnership Boards

Local Members, Town & Parish Councils, other public sector organisations, private sector, voluntary, community and faith sector, etc.

Town & Parish Councils

Voluntary, Community & Faith sectors

Neighbourhood partnerships / community groups

Others e.g. market town partnerships

Local Area Forums

Neighbourhood Partnerships

COMMUNICATIONS

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Proposal – As a statutory requirement, an overarching LSP will be established for the area of Cheshire West and Chester. The emerging consensus is that the LSP should comprise:-

- CW&C Leader or an Executive Member
- CW&C Chief Executive
- Area Commander of Police
- Area Commander of Fire & Rescue
- Chief Executive of NHS West Cheshire
- Nomination from the Third Sector
- Nomination from Private sector (Chamber of Commerce, SMEs and larger companies)
- Representative from the Housing Partnership
- Representative from Further / Higher Education
- Cheshire Probation
- Job Centre Plus
- Representative from Cheshire & Warrington Racial Equality Council
- Government Office North West representative (co-opted)
- North West Development Agency representative (co-opted)
- Thematic Board Chairs – if not covered by the above
- Chairs of Area Partnership Boards - if not covered by the above.

The new LSP needs to be working effectively from 1st April 2009 but the nominated individuals will need to meet as a Steering Group during February and March to collectively consider the emerging 2009-2011 Local Area Agreement (see below), the interim terms of reference and governance arrangements and the progress with establishing the Partnership Framework (specifically APBs and LAFs).

To achieve this, the following **timetable and actions** are being pursued:-

- By 31st January 2009: LSP nominations sought (from each organisation identified above)
- Mid-Feb: An initial meeting of the new LSP to consider Terms and Reference, Chair/Vice Chair and LSP member roles and responsibilities, political governance, administrative support and the LAA Review / Refresh progress.
- Mid-March: To review progress and sign-up to a new LAA for 2009-2011

Thereafter, it is envisaged that the LSP will meet at venues across the new Authority area on a quarterly basis, to oversee effective partnership working, key challenges for the area, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and the delivery of the Local Area Agreement outcomes. The LSP will be supported by regular meetings of the LSP Thematic Leads, who will manage the work programme of the LSP and the LAA and secure the key role for public sector organisations within this group. We would also seek to hold LSP network conferences to keep all partners fully engaged and for the sharing of information, promoting key issues and messages.

For the **Thematic Groups** the proposals are still very much open to debate but the aim is to streamline the current arrangements. The current proposal is to seek four overarching groups, namely:-

(1) Children's Trust [Possible Chair – CW&C Chief Executive]

(2) Safer & Stronger Communities (incorporating the new CDRP and Environment groups) [Possible Chair – Area Commander of Police]

(3) Business and Enterprise (incorporating Economy groups) [Possible Chair – nominations from organisations such as the Third Sector Assembly, Private Sector, Chester Renaissance Board, Northwich Vision, etc]

(4) Health & Well-being (incorporating health, social care and Older People) [Possible Chair – Chief Executive Cheshire West and Chester]

Such an approach would also ensure that there is a direct representative link from each of the thematic groups on the LSP.

Please let us know your views on the proposed approach to establishing a new LSP and the associated thematic groups. It is intended that these “new” groups will emerge from existing groups and that they should be up and running from the 1st April 2009 or sooner.

Area Partnership Boards (APBs)

The Five APBs have been identified and will cover the geographical areas of:-

- Chester;
- Ellesmere Port;
- Northwich & Rural North;
- Winsford & Rural East; and
- Rural West.

These APBs will be **independently chaired “mini-LSPs”** and as such it is envisaged that their membership will draw heavily from the current LSPs. Key members of the Boards will include our public sector partners, representatives from the private sector, the third sector and other key local stakeholders. Member involvement will be through the relevant Chair from each Local Area Forum.

In the first year, APBs will assess evidence of the needs and priorities from within each area to inform development of an **Area Action Plan** and this will help shape service delivery and, most importantly, will require close working with key partners. The Boards will be tasked with performance managing relevant Local Area Agreement and National Indicator Set targets for their area, to ensure service delivery meets the needs of residents.

Where possible, future service delivery will be aligned with the boundaries and priorities of the APBs. From their area perspective, they will also help shape the development of strategic policies and plans and scrutinise the implications for their local area. Clear linkages will be developed from the APBs into the LSP, the Corporate Plan, Local Area Forums and any Neighbourhood arrangements.

Local Area Forums (LAFs)

These are designed to operate at the local level and will involve **all** Councillors from Cheshire West and Chester. The boundaries for these are not yet established but shadow councillors are listening to local views and will meet early February to reach a collective view on the most appropriate boundary for these forums. The intention is that the Forums will operate

within one of the new Area Partnership Boards as a forum for discussion and debate on local topics.

The LAF presents a vital opportunity for the new Council to promote the role of Members in their locality and enhance local democracy generally. Democratic and community engagement will also be enhanced through the delegation of a budget to allow local initiatives to be commissioned. Each LAF will also be seen as the place where local petitions may be responded to and under this arrangement, issues that require a more strategic or local consideration may be escalated to the Area Partnership Board or delegated to the Neighbourhood level.

Neighbourhood Partnerships

Locally-based partnerships will remain at the heart of the proposed Partnership Framework for Cheshire West and Chester. We want to build upon the excellent existing neighbourhood management arrangements in areas such as Blacon, Rudheath, Greenfields (Winsford) as well as the nationally acclaimed Lache Neighbourhood Management.

We also want to continue developing the principles and models of good practice in relation to service delivery and citizen engagement and extending this where appropriate. Important partners at the neighbourhood level include Town and Parish Councils, tenants and residents groups. Some innovative and valued working has taken place with partners around Community Safety Problem Solving Groups, Project Rural Matters and Community Action Meetings, etc. – we will be keen to develop such areas of good practice.

3. LAA Review and Refresh

There has been overwhelmingly consensus that the 3 year statutory Local Area Agreement targets for the period 2008-2011 should continue to form the broad base for outcomes that we are seeking to deliver. This agreement was based upon "severable" targets for the area of Cheshire West and Chester. The current Thematic Groups are reviewing progress against the existing LAA identifying any areas where changes may be required and negotiating on our behalf with central Government and the Government Office Northwest (GONW). An updated position will be reported to the Communities of Cheshire Partnership in January but also (as outlined in section 3 above) to the LSP nominated representatives in February and March to ensure that we collectively sign up to the partnership delivery of these outcomes for the next two years. The 2009-2011 LAA will be required to be formally signed off, on behalf of the Partnership, by the Executive Group at Cheshire West and Chester Council by 26th March 2009.

2009 Timescales:-

January	GONW Review of LAA Targets including Annual Review conclusions sent to central Government
30 January	Communities of Cheshire Partnership to agree the review and refresh process
February	LSP Nominated Representatives to review emerging 2009-2011 LAA
2 March	Final or near final refreshed LAA sent to GONW
9 March	GONW make recommendations to Ministers
March	Throughout March negotiations to be concluded on any outstanding issues
26 March	Formal adoption process completed and final LAA submitted to GONW

4. Sustainable Community Strategy

We have an Interim Sustainable Community Strategy based on the current four Strategies which cover the area of CW&C but it is widely recognised that one of first challenges is to develop a new longer term (10 year) strategy for our Partnership.

The timescale and processes for undertaking this are as follows: -

Timescale

by 30th April	Self-Evaluation / State of the Borough evidenced-based review of the area of Cheshire West and Chester.
by 30th June	LSP to issue a draft 2009-2019 Sustainable Community Strategy for Consultation.
by 30th October	Formally endorse the new 2009-2019 Sustainable Community Strategy

5. Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council - Taking the Vision Forward

The new Council has organised its Area and Community Services through the portfolio of Councillor John Grimshaw and will continue to develop the new arrangements outlined above in a way that deals effectively with the many cross-cutting issues that arise through the neighbourhoods and forums.

At a more strategic level, partnerships and the work associated with the Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategy, as well as the links these will need to have with the Authority's Corporate Plan, will be part of the Strategic Leadership Portfolio held by the Leader, Councillor Mike Jones. This is to emphasise the importance this whole area of work will have under the new arrangements.

Through closer and more joined-up working with our partners, we hope this will be part of a journey for all our strategic plans, with all eventually fully aligned into a new way of working for the benefit of our residents. For our communities, not least, we will want them to expect nothing but the best which, through our plans for partnership working, customer access and communications, will seek to support people whenever and wherever we can.

Your views on this bulletin and on any of the issues raised will be most welcome. These should be forwarded to either:-

Alistair Jeffs
CWAC Head of Service, Policy Performance & Partnerships
e-mail – alistair.jeffs@cheshire.gov.uk

or

Mike Lewis
CWAC Director of Area and Community Services
e-mail – Mike.Lewis@Cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Cheshire West and Chester Partnership Event - 8th December 2008

The Holiday Inn, Ellesmere Port

Emerging themes from workshop groups

Q1. We will move to a single LSP for Cheshire West and Chester. Who should be the key partners on the LSP and the key thematic groups?

- All sectors need to be represented, with all engaged and understanding the issues.
- Representation should be flexible and as appropriate to the issues raised.
- Need people who can take decisions and “move resources”.
- Also need people who are able to make clear the links between the “top table” and the thematic groups, supported by excellent communications.
- With an independent Chairman, the “top table” should comprise:
 - Leader or an Executive Member (ideally with Partnerships portfolio)
 - CW&C Chief Executive
 - Area Commander of Police
 - Area Commander of Fire & Rescue
 - Chief Executive of PCT
 - Representative from Education (Headteacher's Association, FE, HE)
 - Representative from Third Sector Assembly
 - Representative from Private Sector (Chamber of Commerce, SMEs and larger companies)
 - Representative from Strategic Housing Authority
 - Representatives from thematic groups.
- Thematic groups should maintain equitable representation from the same key partners but as appropriate to their alignment with work streams and LAA themes.
- Thematic groups must also be flexible in being able to co-opt representatives as appropriate to the issues being raised.
- One group asked if an LSP was necessary with APBs in place and could there be a confusion in roles and responsibilities.
- A greater emphasis, therefore, on good communications.

Q2. What improvements or difference do you see Area Partnership Boards delivering?

- Improvements include a local flavour to the strategic agenda e.g. LAA
- Introduction of robust performance management i.e. for delivery and stretch.
- Some, however, felt there were too many layers in this framework and it would be too bureaucratic with communications a problem.
- Difference will depend on several elements:
 - the size and scope of the areas;
 - which elected Members are involved;
 - the role of Town & Parish Councils;
 - the local issues emerging;
 - how they link to neighbourhoods;
 - how partners buy-in to this new way of working;
 - how in delivery terms it will be important to emphasise that one size does not necessarily fit all;
 - how partners take the opportunity to align strategies with Area Action Plans; and
 - how partners take the opportunity to align or pool budgets.

Q3. What issues raised in the Third Sector Assembly presentation could you immediately help with?

Groups identified a range of support that may be offered, as follows:

- To increase awareness and understanding of issues, with a clarity of roles;
- With commissioning opportunities;
- Promotion, facilitation and signposting;
- Planning law;
- To release potential (of all partners, organisations and individuals);
- With cross-cutting formal links;
- Publicity and communications.

One group did, however, ask if the Third Sector Assembly was able to adequately represent all community, voluntary and faith organisations. Was there any mapping of Third Sector groups that was inclusive, with recognition of smaller groups.

Q4. What was the issue in the Joint Strategic Needs assessment that you found most interesting?

Groups saw a number of challenges here, as follows:

- It should be joined up and overlaid with the Strategic Assessment;
- Uncertain if there is a formal tie-in to LAA objectives e.g. mental health and all alcohol issues;
- Information shared to allow partners to become more strategic;
- Still some differences in measurement;
- Importance of local evidence (one story of place and impact of CAA);
- Not enough on BME groups;
- LSP role to co-ordinate on issues
- Some communications issues.

Q5. What was the issue in the Strategic Assessment that you found most surprising?

Groups found the following issues most surprising:

- Public perception versus reality and how local level action may improve the “feel good” factor (work still required on fear of crime issues);
- Agencies seem to be working together, but in a comprehensive way e.g. shared evidence bases?
- Promotion of positive images should provide greater confidence;
- Benefits of co-location as a preventative response.

Other issues

- Will structures remain flexible to the wider context?
- LAA partnership desks (co-location)
- Identify relevance of work (e.g. to private sector representatives)
- Local decision makers need to be identified
- Political clout – where is the political interface?
- Are we alert to tensions (politically and operational)?