

CABINET

17 July 2007

NEW WAY OF WORKING FOR WINCHESTER DISTRICT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

REPORT OF HEAD OF PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Board of the Winchester District Strategic Partnership (WDSP) held an away-day in March 2007. Comments made during the meeting indicated that a change to the way the Board works is required to enable the role of the Board overall, and of its individual members, to be fulfilled consistently. This report sets out the proposed new way of working for the Board which will address these issues and help make the Board fit for purpose to deliver the Community Strategy.

The new structure aims to focus activity around the five Community Strategy outcomes, and will provide better opportunities for elected Members to engage with the structure, exercise community leadership in their area and to scrutinise partnership arrangements in the Winchester District.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That Cabinet agree the new structure for the Winchester District Strategic Partnership.
- 2 That Cabinet delegate agreement of the detail of the structure to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

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DETAIL:

1 Context

- 1.1 The Board of the Winchester District Strategic Partnership (WDSP) held an away-day in March 2007. Comments made during the meeting indicated that a change to the way the Board works is required to enable the role of the Board overall, and of its individual members, to be fulfilled consistently.
- 1.2 The City Council is beginning to work more closely with local communities in respect of their own local community planning projects. Cabinet has agreed a Community Planning protocol for the Winchester District which sets out how the City Council as well as the WDSP will respond to community plans.
- 1.3 The Local Government White Paper has set a new context for partnership working. The White Paper continues to emphasise the role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). It also reinforces the community leadership responsibility of local Councillors in overseeing the 'wellbeing' of an area, and therefore the key role they need to play in LSPs.

The White Paper puts down a marker in respect of:

- the establishment of county-wide (in 2-tier areas) partnerships for Health and Wellbeing, and county-wide Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). This complements the county-wide children and young people structures already in place under the Children Act 2004;
 - the increasing importance of the role of the Local Area Agreements (LAAs) as a channel for government funding to geographical areas;
 - the need for improvements in working arrangements between democratic tiers, including devolution and other arrangements which empower local communities;
 - a radical change in performance monitoring and inspection regimes for councils with a focus on community outcomes, and a reduction in the number of nationally set targets and indicators to enable public sector organisations to respond more readily to local circumstances and to enter into more meaningful partnership arrangements.
- 1.4 The governance structure for the Hampshire Local Area Agreement is currently under review. The new way of working for the WDSP has taken account of this, and aims to make the best use of proposed LAA structure to the advantage of the Winchester District.

2 Drawbacks of current Board arrangements

- 2.1 At the WDSP away-day in March it was felt that some of the major responsibilities of the Board are not being carried out adequately due to the current structure of the partnership. At present the WDSP consists of a Board with a network of partnerships (for example the Community Safety partnership) beneath it.
- 2.2 The Board is responsible for keeping an overview of the entirety of the wellbeing of Winchester District, as well as monitoring the performance of the Community Strategy and being accountable for the delivery of the Strategy amongst other roles.
- 2.3 The current structure is not conducive this, and the Board is expected to undertake a number of roles which it cannot successfully perform whilst meeting in its current form.
- 2.4 The main issues which the re-structure seeks to address are:
- improved support for actions and projects to deliver the Community Strategy
 - improved communication throughout the governing structure of the WDSP,
 - increased involvement and community leadership of elected members,
 - better accountability.

3 WDSP new ways of working

- 3.1 This report sets out the new way of working for the Board which would address these issues and help make the Board fit for purpose to deliver the Community Strategy, making full use of the LAA process to help achieve this. A new draft structure for the Board is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 One of the main reasons why the Board is unable to fulfil its role is that its brief is no less than the entire sustainable wellbeing of the Winchester District. This means that the Board is necessarily large as it needs to take account of all quality of life themes. Although this is important to enable the 'joining up' of a range of agendas, in practical terms this makes it difficult to sustain focus at the Board meetings on issues such as the strategic alignment of resources to help deliver a particular outcome.
- 3.3 In order to address this, it is proposed that the current 2-monthly 'whole Board' meetings happen much less frequently (once or twice a year). This will enable Board members to spend their time more productively focusing on the specific outcome to which their work predominately relates. To this end it is proposed that 5 'Strategic Outcome Groups' are created.
- 3.4 The 5 'Strategic Outcome Groups' will be self-selecting from the current Board membership with additional membership to include the relevant City Council Portfolio Holder, and relevant City Council Corporate Director. This will form the standing membership of the Group.

4 Role of the Strategic Outcome Groups

- 4.1 The Strategic Outcome Groups will have the following purpose:

Ensure that sufficient action is being taken to ensure the outcome is being delivered in the Winchester District by

- taking an overview and monitoring key indicators as set out in the Community Strategy;
- assisting in solving strategic issues preventing or slowing achievement of the outcome, and in particular progress in turning the priority 'curves' set out in the Community Strategy;
- directing the work of those thematic partnerships whose work is contributing to the achievement of the outcome;
- monitoring the performance of these thematic partnerships and reporting back on progress to the Full Board meeting;
- involving chairs of thematic partnerships where they are not already involved in the Board activities;
- involving Portfolio Holders of the City Council;
- involving Corporate Directors of the City Council.

4.2 To ensure that new silos are not created when the Strategic Outcome Groups are formed, a new open way of working will be adopted by the WDSP, with good communication with partnerships forming a principal aspect of this. For example, the Children and Young People Partnership will be contributing to all the outcomes to some extent and will also need to influence the work of other partnerships as well as delivering its own specific programme. Each Strategic Outcome Group will have its own standing membership but meetings will be high profile and well-advertised to all partnerships so that any Strategic Outcome Group, or other thematic partnership, can add an item to the agenda and attend to raise issues.

5 The Role of the Full Board

5.1 There will still be a need for the Full Board to meet to fulfil the following roles:

- To share experiences and ensure a full overview of progress towards the vision of the Community Strategy
- To update the Community Strategy in line with changes in policy/legislative framework and other changing circumstances
- To fulfil the role of overall accountable body for the activities of the LSP
- To resolve problems affecting partnership working in the District e.g. resource issues, differing priorities, conflicts in policy which affect the sustainability of the District etc where these affect more than one Community Strategy outcome
- To link with the LAA governance arrangements

5.2 Within the new WDSP structure, the Full Board meetings will involve a wider range of participants than currently, for example:

- All members of the Strategic Outcome Groups
- A representative of the larger parish councils, and the Town Forum (to represent the geographical areas of the District)

5.3 The Full Board meetings will happen once or twice a year and will be chaired by the Leader of the City Council. This would create a link with a new county-wide board comprising all council leaders which is proposed as part of new LAA governance arrangements, as well as enhance the City Council's community leadership role overall.

6 Proposal to Create an Executive Board

- 6.1 Even with the above structures in place, there will still be some functions of the current Board outstanding. The WDSP Board have agreed that a small Executive Board should meet every 3 months or as necessary to undertake these functions. It is recommended that this group is chaired by a partner organisation and not the City Council (which will be chairing the WDSP overall through the full Board). Their roles will be as follows:
- To receive national guidance and regional strategies/policies (e.g. Regional Economic Strategy, Partnership for Urban South Hampshire agenda etc) and set in context for the Winchester District,
 - To monitor indicators identified by Strategic Outcome Groups as problem/worrying indicators,
 - To keep an overview of the LAA process, and governance issues,
 - To take decisions/actions where necessary to resolve issues identified by Strategic Outcome Groups in the course of their work.
- 6.2 Winchester City Council officers will work closely with this group to ensure it is properly supported and kept abreast of policy developments and issues. As it would take decisions on behalf of the Full Board, procedures, quorum etc would need to be agreed.

7 Role of elected Members

- 7.1 This new structure increases and improves the opportunities for elected Members to become involved in the WDSP and to exercise their community leadership role in overseeing the wellbeing of the District.
- 7.2 The Full Board will be chaired by the Leader of the City Council, and this will be the accountable body for the WDSP. Portfolio Holders will have the opportunity to be closely involved in the five Strategic Outcome Groups, as well as sitting on the thematic partnerships. On the Strategic Outcome Groups, they will be able to play a key role in monitoring and directing the delivery of that particular outcome.
- 7.3 The new structure will also facilitate closer scrutiny by the City Council. The WDSP is aiming for performance information against the five outcomes to be readily available, using the City Council's electronic performance management system. This will support better scrutiny of the work of the WDSP. The creation of the five Strategic outcome groups also ensures scrutiny at the right level with the right people involved. Currently, scrutiny of the WDSP Board is difficult due to its wide variety of roles. These groups will now have a very specific role, supported by City Council officers and supported by performance information.
- 7.4 The WDSP has recently launched its website (www.wdsp.co.uk) and its regular e-bulletin. These tools will help communication around partnership working and inform Members of partnerships' programmes of work and opportunities to become involved. It is also planned that there will be an online form on the WDSP website for partners to submit items for the agenda of the Strategic Outcome Groups, allowing much more transparent ways of working and promoting good two-way communication throughout the partnerships.

7.5 Cabinet recently agreed the Winchester District Community Planning Protocol and Guidance. The WDSP Board has also signed up to the Protocol, as local community planning will form a key part of the evidence base and Community Strategy for the District, as well as providing actions to be taken on by partner agencies. Local Councillors have an important part to play in supporting community planning, and community plans will form a key way in which Councillors can take part in the WDSP and influence the Community Strategy. The City Council's recent re-organisation has also freed up officer capacity to play a greater role in working alongside local councillors and communities to stimulate community planning.

8 Conclusion

8.1 This report sets out the new ways of working for the WDSP; one which will improve accountability, performance management and communication throughout the partnership, therefore enabling the delivery of the Community Strategy, securing good outcomes for the Winchester District.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

9 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

9.1 The Winchester District Strategic Partnership is the main vehicle through which the City Council can "*work with partner organisations to deliver improvements in quality of life across the district*".

10 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

10.1 The re-structuring of the WDSP will be undertaken within current staff resource commitments.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – New structure of the Winchester District Strategic Partnership

