

17 January 2012

Area Community Plans Achievements & Learning Points

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Zahid Ali, Communities and Partnerships

Executive Summary:

Area Community Plans have quickly been established in all six Area Partnerships to respond to local issues and improve service delivery. The scale of activity has been high and a significant proportion of activities are being completed quickly.

Success in tackling issues has been higher for local issues that require a different way of working locally between delivery partners. Greater emphasis on complex issues that occur in a number of areas is needed in the future to ensure a permanent improvement in services is achieved. This will be monitored through the newly established Operations Group (see appendix 1 for structure).

The local approach has allowed a number of new initiatives to be developed in an area before being expanded across all areas. This has included novel approaches to tackling anti-social behaviour, improving literacy and developing capacity in the voluntary sector.

Reason for scrutiny:

Area Partnerships form part of the Communities and Partnerships Portfolio and the Scrutiny Panel previously requested to receive a six-monthly update on progress of the Area Community Plans.

This report includes an update on progress of the Area Community Plans and highlights the learning identified over the past six months.

Recommendations:

That:

1. Members note progress of the Area Community Plans implemented through Area Partnerships.
2. a further update be received in six months of the further progress of Area Partnerships.

Background papers:

Evaluation of Area Partnerships – presented to Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 12th July 2011.

Area Community Plans (Operational) – available on the Area Partnerships website.

Resource and legal considerations:

The level of officer support for Area Partnerships has been increased by one officer following the evaluation undertaken in 2011. This level of support will need to be maintained to ensure the current high level of work undertaken through Area Partnerships continues. Financial support from partners is expected to be continued from April 2012 for another twelve months and is currently undergoing the formal approval process.

Citizen impact:

Area Partnerships directly impact on Walsall's citizens and stakeholders through the identification of local issues and delivery of actions to address these issues. The Area Community Plans encourage local residents to be involved in solving issues that affect the quality of life in Walsall.

Environmental impact:

Many of the issues already identified and delivered within the Area Community Plans have a positive environmental impact, resulting from residents' concerns about environmental issues. This includes improvements to green spaces and resident-led litter clearances.

Performance management:

Actions within the Area Community Plans are reviewed monthly by the Area Managers and key local partners to ensure actions are relevant and to track progress of actions. Four formal reviews are undertaken of the Area Plans every year when a revised version is published on the Area Partnerships website.

Progress on actions and identification of delayed actions are reported to the new Borough Management Team.

Equality implications:

A specific Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for Area Partnerships. It showed that there are no activities or workstream priorities identified in Area Community Plans that exclude any residents because of their 'protected characteristics'.

Consultation:


Area Community Plans have been developed in consultation with locally Elected Members within each Area Partnership.

On-going issues and progress are discussed at the quarterly Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting.

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1. Area Community Plan Achievements

- 1.1 Area Community Plans have been operational for just less than twelve months with the activities within each area being developed according to local intelligence on data statistics as well as in response to residents' perceptions. Each area has developed a set of workstreams according to local needs, such as dealing with anti-social behaviour or improving educational attainment.
- 1.2 Actions are agreed by delivery organisations that are held to account to their obligations by the Area Managers. The delivery organisations report to the Area Partner Meetings on progress or reasons for delays.
- 1.3 Over the first nine months of Area Plans being operational, 1,200 actions were identified for delivery. Around a third of these were completed within six months.
- 1.4 Analysis of the completed actions shows that many actions included dealing with anti-social behaviour, improving the environment and provision for young people and older people. Many of these issues were relatively straightforward to address with around 60% of the anti-social behaviour issues and 45% of cleaner, greener issues completed within six months.
- 1.5 More complex issues, such as dealing with health inequalities, education or worklessness, have not had such a level of completed actions. Around 20% of education issues and 15% of health issues have been completed within six months. At this stage it is not possible to determine whether this is a problem or just an inevitable consequence that these complex issues have more long-term needs and will not be solved by a simple change by delivery organisations.
- 1.6 It is possible that the emphasis on local tasking and actions has resulted in issues that require local responses being completed quickly. Delivery organisations have responded to issues with actions that they can directly affect.
- 1.7 It is vital to monitor the rate of new and completed issues to understand which issues are not being completed quickly, the reasons behind this and to take suitable corrective actions. If these actions require a more strategic, borough-wide response, then this will be reported to the new Operations Group.

2. Evolving the Area Partnerships

- 2.1 Guidance expressed by Elected Members at the beginning of the Area Partnership project was to allow each of the six Area Partnerships to respond to its own needs, involve the relevant local partners and operate in a way that suited local arrangements.
- 2.2 Each Area Partnership has evolved in response to this guidance which has resulted in the choice of Area Community Plan workstreams being different for each area. While there are some workstreams common to most areas (anti-social behaviour, health, young people) there are also some workstreams developed to respond to a uniquely local issue, such as scrap wagons in North

Walsall or leisure facilities in Darlaston and Bentley.

- 2.3 This local approach of each Area Partnership has also been extended to the way meetings take place. Some areas have monthly Area Partner Meetings with fixed agenda items while other areas hold less frequent themed meetings with a more varied agenda.
- 2.4 While this approach is preferred by the majority of partners, some which operate to more formal systems at a borough-wide level (such as the Police) have expressed some concerns that this approach does not allow for a consistent intervention above a local level. This is being monitored to ensure it does not affect the effectiveness of Area Partnerships.
- 2.5 Intelligence for the local actions is being improved through the effective data gathering of the Walsall Intelligence Network. This allows local actions to be justified in relation to a borough-wide strategy.

3. Developing Learning in Area Partnerships

- 3.1 The local approach of Area Partnerships allows new and novel responses to long-standing issues. It allows partners to develop a local partnership response which may be more effective than the existing ways of working.
- 3.2 This allows partners to see beyond their usual activities to focus on causes of issues, addressing a longer-term response rather than a short-term fix.
- 3.3 An example of this approach was developed in North Walsall in response to anti-social behaviour (ASB). Rather than responding to each ASB incident by a single partner depending upon what the incident was, an Area Partnership-wide approach was undertaken to engage all partners that had to deal with the causes and effects of ASB. ASB patrols were developed with a range of partners including the Police, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, Integrated Young Peoples Support Services, housing providers, Social Care & Inclusion, voluntary organisations and Elected Members. The patrols were undertaken at night with all partners in coaches and minibuses. This allowed them to witness a range of ASB activities and to respond in a more positive way, such as providing information on services and activities available for young people.
- 3.4 Following the pilot patrols in North Walsall, ASB patrols have now taken place in all six Area Partnerships.
- 3.5 Other examples of learning being developed in a single Area Partnership before sharing across the entire Area partnerships are listed below.
 - 3.5.1 In Brownhills, Pelsall, Rushall and Shelfield, a new approach of co-locating services is being trialled. A disused community room is to be brought back into use as a local hub with partner agencies operating from the room to deliver services to a community which is quite isolated from Brownhills and the rest of Walsall.
 - 3.5.2 The Aldridge and Beacon Area Partnership has piloted a new way of providing services for elderly people that will enable a broader range of services to be

available for a wider group of people. It also reduces the costs of delivery by transporting elderly people to the service rather than delivering services in individual houses.

- 3.5.3 As metal theft is a significant issue in parts of Walsall, the North Walsall Area Partnership has developed a workstream to tackle the problem. It has established an e-petition to remove cash sales for scrap metal that currently has over 50,000 votes on the government's e-petition website.
- 3.5.4 The Walsall South Area Partnership is piloting Operation Literacy to tackle the low rate of children's literacy in its area. The project links to the National Literacy Trust to encourage a positive approach to reading by increasing young people's aspirations and those of their parents and extended families to influence educational attainment.
- 3.5.5 Social Care & Inclusion and national charity WRVS, supported by the Darlaston/Bentley Area Partnership, have piloted a project in Moxley with the underlying principle of sustaining the development of a new culture within local communities which enables citizens to take greater control of their lives and the care or support they receive in a more personalized way. The objective of the Moxley Community Project is to develop a method of operation that can robustly establish the community roots necessary to embed these objectives across the whole Borough. It should enable Walsall citizens to live a more independent and fulfilled life.
- 3.5.6 The Willenhall and Short Heath Area Partnership has developed a pilot project for increasing the role of the voluntary sector in its activities. The initial work started with a funding workshop attended by local groups with speakers from a number of funding agencies. The funding workshops will be delivered in other areas.

4. Future Activities

- 4.1 Area Partnerships will develop future activities by building on the successes of the first 18 months of activity. Residents' priorities are being tackled but it is important to ensure that harder-to-tackle issues are addressed. Area Partnerships need to influence how services are delivered in local areas, not just how the Council engages with residents.
- 4.2 The longer-term impact of Area Partnerships requires officers from across the Council and other organisations as well as Elected Members clearly understanding and delivering their contribution to Area Plans.
- 4.3 Increasing communication of the role of Area Partnerships, key activities, successes and difficulties is vital to ensure their future effectiveness
- 4.4 A review of the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy will be undertaken over the next three months to ensure an alignment exists between the strategy and the workstream activities within the Area Community Plans.

4.5 Key objectives for the forthcoming municipal year include:

- Deliver a programme of activities in each of the six Area Partnerships detailed in the Area Community Plans.
- Review Area Community Plans frequently to ensure they are up to date and relevant to local needs.
- Evaluate Area Community Plans to understand which issues are being advanced quickly and which issues are not being implemented and reasons for this.
- Improve the sharing of knowledge and best practice between the six Area Partnerships.
- Review the Area Community Plan format to ensure it links with other strategic plans and allows detailed evaluation.
- Integrate the role of Elected Members as champions of key activities.
- Increase the promotional and communication activities to enhance the profile of Area Partnerships.
- Increase engagement with residents and their involvement in resolving issues.

Appendix 1 – Walsall Partnership structure and information flow

Walsall Partnership

