

AT A MEETING
- of the -
**RESOURCES AND
PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY
AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**
held at the Council House,
Walsall on **1 September 2005** at
6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Sanders (Chair)
Councillor Sahori (Vice Chair)
Councillor Chambers
Councillor Griffiths
Councillor Micklewright
Councillor Rochelle
Councillor Turner

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Andy Burns (Assistant Director of Finance)
Brian Holland (Director - Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership)
Ross Bell (Assistant Director - Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership)

SCRUTINY SUPPORT

Helen Dudson, (Service Development & Interim Scrutiny Manager)
Stuart Bentley, (Scrutiny Support Officer)

9. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Young and Councillor Longhi (Portfolio holder).

10. **SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no changes in membership.

11. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

The members of the political groups represented on the Panel indicated there were no whipping arrangements for any of the political parties in respect of items on the agenda. There were no declarations of interest.

12. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2005, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

(annexed)

13. MINUTES FROM CPA USE OF RESOURCES WORK GROUP

Helen. Dudson briefed the panel on the two meetings of the working group held on 12 July and 17 August 2005. She stated that the working group had agreed to consider corporate policies and procedures that support the delivery of efficiency savings by focusing on the Value for Money requirements within the CPA framework.

Councillor Rochelle stated that the remit was initially huge but had been narrowed down to Value for Money and efficiency savings. He noted that the membership of the 2 working groups was uneven and requested that he move to the LAA working group in the interests of balance.

Councillor Sanders welcomed the proposal and stated that it was a positive move.

Councillor Rochelle stated that he was attending an LAA conference on 6 September, along with Councillor Turner, and suggested that other Members might also benefit by attending. There was general agreement, but concerns over clashes with other events precluding Members from attending.

Councillor Sanders welcomed the attendance of Members at these events and stated that it was important that Members attend these events when possible.

Councillor Chambers suggested that Members attending these events could feedback to the Panel. He stated he had previously passed PTA report forms to Organisational Development that he thought may be useful. Helen Dudson stated that Yvonne Evitts should have details.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held 17 August 2005, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

(annexed)

That Councillor Rochelle move from the CPA Use of Resources Working Group to the LAA Working Group.

14. PRESENTATION REGARDING LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA)

Councillor Sanders welcomed Brian Holland and Ross Bell from the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership.

Brian Holland gave a presentation on the “Local Area Agreements - Developing the Walsall Approach” and tabled a schedule of training and consultation events for Members information.

(annexed)

Councillor Sanders thanked Brian Holland for his presentation. He then addressed the Panel and stated that the Panel had to be clear as to what the LAA Working Group could best achieve. He then asked Brian Holland how this group could make an impact on the LAA.

Brian Holland replied that the key area was the “buy-in” from the partners and colleagues. He stated that the Members could play a leading role as advocates for the process by promoting coherency in partnership working. He further stated that this would probably require a culture change within the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) with a move to a more strategic focus.

Councillor Sanders stated that Blakenall had a history of spending on projects that had failed, but that there was now progress due to a sustainable economic base and Walsall Council had been the driving force. He then asked Brian Holland who would have the final decision on priorities for the LAA.

Brian Holland replied that the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) would take the lead, but reminded the Panel that the leader of the Council was also Chair of the LSP. He also stated that the Council was the accountable body and could be considered as first among partners.

Ross Bell further stated that it was vital to have the diversity of elected Members input to reflect the local needs.

Councillor Rochelle stated that deprivation could occur in seemingly affluent areas and asked whether funding could be targeted to these areas in the future.

Brian Holland replied that Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) monies were usually targeted at the most deprived areas of the community. However, there is a move to super outcome funding that can target specific streets based on the improvements in information resources.

Councillor Turner asked how the LNPs would be approached to promote the LAA.

Brian Holland replied that the Chairs of the LNPs had been invited to a training / consultation event aimed at the Community and Voluntary sector and they had also been invited to the launch of the Community Plan along with all Elected Members. He further stated that LNPs could help highlight schemes that could help to achieve the LAA targets. However, all schemes must be submitted with the predicted impact on the relevant performance indicators.

Councillor Griffiths stated that he was aware that there had been several pilot authorities for LAAs and he asked if there had been any feedback from these.

Brian Holland replied that there had been 3 pilots within the region at Telford & Wrekin, Coventry and Wolverhampton. He stated that Telford & Wrekin had dealt with the single pot framework and that Coventry and Wolverhampton had experienced some difficulties and had struggled with setting the freedoms and flexibilities. He believed that lessons had been learnt from these pilot authorities and issues they had had been taken into account.

Councillor Griffiths stated that as a Chair of a LNP committee, he was aware that members of the public still considered them as talking shops and he stated that more presentations may not be the easiest way to get the public to “buy-in” to the process.

Brian Holland stated that there would have to be communications with the LNPs to engage them and to emphasise the importance of the process to them. However, LNPs need to move away from the member workshop style of meeting to address more strategic issues. This will require a culture change within the LNPs and Julie Ball is already working with Chairs to try and achieve this.

Ross Bell also stated that the whole community fora would be utilised. Finding out which fora were appropriate for a range of issues would be vital.

Councillor Chambers asked what method would be used to set the high level criteria. Would these be the big public issues in the Borough.

Brian Holland replied that much of the criteria would reflect the Community Plan and people would need to be clear about what these were.

Councillor Chambers expressed his concerns that NRF money, derived from 11 areas of deprivation within the borough, was being spent borough wide and that the ability to do this was not made clear when the fund was granted.

Brian Holland stated that NRF monies were being spent in order to achieve critical targets borough wide, but that by the very nature of these targets, it was obvious that monies would be targeted at the most deprived areas.

Councillor Micklewright asked that, considering that the Council was the accountable body, how would performance monitoring occur across the partners.

Brian Holland stated that data would come from diverse sources, but the new shared data resource would aid in pooling performance indicators and other data from partners to assist in the monitoring process.

Councillor Sarohi asked for clarification that any projects initiated under the LAA would have to conclude by the end of the 3 year life of the LAA. If this was the case, how would sustainability be achieved.

Brian Holland agreed that projects would be limited to the length of the LAA. However, it was a requirement that sustainability be built in to the projects at the outset with proposals for the level of support from core funding.

Councillor Turner asked if the criteria would, therefore, be how cost effective the project would be.

Brian Holland replied that the key issue would be how sustainable it would be.

Councillor Rochelle stated that he was aware that simply rethinking lighting in an area could lead to a reduction in crime. He also asked whether more could be done with community centres to help improve the lives of the elderly.

Brian Holland replied that these were good examples of the kind of issues the LNPs could raise.

Ross Bell stated that there had to be a joined up planning process to integrate all the needs of the community when addressing issues.

Councillor Sarohi stated that he was aware that the public were bringing issues to the LNPs but being told that there was no money to address them.

Brian Holland stated that it was about improving the area.

Councillor Sanders thanked Brian Holland and Ross Bell for their input and asked Helen Dudson to give a brief summary.

Helen Dudson stated that, in the Council's Performance Management framework, the Community Plan was the over-arching document and that it feeds into the Council's Vision Priorities and pledges. The LAA would also fit within this framework because of its relationship with the Community Plan. Reward grants would only be released by the achievement of a minimum of 60% of the stretch targets and, therefore, the setting of the stretch targets was an important issue. LNPs would be engaged by the framework and through the Pillar groups as explained by Brian Holland. It was also important that partner performance management data mesh and that this was being addressed by the adoption of a common software solution (CorVu).

Councillor Turner suggested that a "Will it work?" – "Does it work?" – "Did it work?" approach be used to assess the process.

Andy Burns asked if there was something tangible that the Panel could bring to the process, given the tight timetable.

Brian Holland suggested that the Panel could take a lead in the training process and champion engagement.

Andy Burns stated that LNPs have local plans that cut across the Pillar groups. He then asked what the mechanism was for checking that these plans were adequately reflected in the LAA.

Brian Holland replied that these plans were reflected in the Community Plan, but agreed that it was key that Members ensure alignment between plans.

Helen Dudson asked if the Panel could look at how target setting was undertaken.

Brian Holland replied that it would be useful to have a follow up session when the plan was in place.

Helen Dudson suggested that it might be useful to look at the process of finalising the LAA while it was being completed.

Brian Holland replied that the key dates were 30 September, when the first draft would be submitted to the Government, and the end of December when the second submission is due. It would be useful for Members to look at the draft between those dates.

Councillor Sanders referred to a slide in the presentation showing the framework and wondered whether scrutiny was in the right place. He then asked whether the working group might look at the sustainability of the LNPs.

Andy Burns suggested that the sustainability of the LNPs might be better addressed through the budget process and by the Community Organisation, Leisure and Culture Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Councillor Turner asked if the LNPs were addressing the LAA correctly.

Brian Holland agreed that this was a valid question, but that there still needed to be a culture change within the LNPs before this could be addressed.

Councillor Sanders asked if the framework would work without the LNPs.

Brian Holland replied that it would not and that some other organisation would be needed, perhaps the community empowerment network.

Ross Bell stated that the idea was to develop the whole community sector in order to have a robust connection to the community.

Councillor Sanders suggested that the working group may wish to look at the framework and assess what the impact of the loss of parts may be.

Councillor Turner suggested that the first working group meeting should be to discuss this presentation and the conference on 6 September.

Helen Dudson agreed with Councillor Turner and suggested that the second meeting should consider the draft plan.

Resolved:

That, at least, two meetings of the LAA Working Group be arranged before December 2005. The first meeting to discuss findings from the meeting of the Resource and Performance Scrutiny and Performance Panel, 1 September 2005

and the Member Briefing Session to be held at Worcestershire County Council, 6 September 2005. The work group could then consider how best to examine the LAA further and at the second meeting the group would consider the draft LAA plan before submission of the second draft to the Government in late December 2005.

15. FORWARD PLAN

Helen Dudson informed the Panel of the new arrangements for the circulation of the Forward Plan.

Councillor Sanders urged Members to contact him, prior to future agenda setting meetings, with any issues arising from the forward plan.

16. PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Helen Dudson gave a brief overview of the work programme highlighting the requirement for dates for the Decision Conferencing events to be added.

(annexed)

Councillor Sanders urged Members to attend these Decision Conferencing events if possible as they are both valuable and interesting.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Panel has been arranged for 13 October 2005. Councillor Rochelle gave his apologies in advance of this meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7:56 p.m.