

Coventry Local Public Service Board

Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2008

Present:

Stella Manzie, Coventry City Council (Chair)

Cllr Ken Taylor, Coventry City Council

Jos Parry, Coventry City Council

Jenni Venn, Coventry City Council

Deborah Harrod, West Midlands Police

Sarah Chand, Probation Service

Jane Beaver, Job Centre Plus

Mark Tovey, Government Office West Midlands (GOWM)

Cat Parker, Coventry City Council

Ros Roke, Coventry Partnership Secretariat

Apologies:

Sara Roach, Coventry City Council and Community Safety Partnership

Chief Executives, Coventry Teaching Primary Care Trust (CTPCT)

Peter Shearing, Learning and Skills Council

Mark Taylor, West Midlands Fire Service

1. Welcome and Apologies

Stella welcomed everybody to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Ros Roke, Coventry Partnership, reported that the Director of Children's Service, Colin Green would attend the next meeting of the Local Public Service Board on 4 February to give an overview of progress against actions to improve the attainment of Looked After Children.

Sara Roach, Head of Community Safety, and Deborah Harrod, West Midlands Police would provide a similar overview for Community Safety at the meeting on 3 March. Furthermore, Caron Graniger, Director of Public Health, would attend the meeting on 8 April to discuss performance against the indicators for Health.

3. Developing the New Local Area Agreement

Ros Roke, Coventry Partnership, gave a brief overview of progress in developing priorities and agreeing indicators for the new Local Area Agreement. Ros highlighted the main points of feedback from the meeting of Theme Group Leaders and Advisors on 19 December 2007. She reported that this meeting had provided an important opportunity to work across themes and consider the relationships between themes and between the emerging priorities. Jenni Venn, Coventry City Council, referred members of the Board to the latest version of the draft Local Area Agreement document 'Developing Priorities and Indicators for the Local Area Agreement'. Jenni advised that the latest document took account of the feedback from Theme Group Leaders and Advisors and referenced specific indicators.

Stella proposed that the relationships between priorities in the Local Area Agreement should be recognised in a very overt way throughout the final document. It was recognised that if presented effectively, the broad relationships between priorities could be something that the public, councillors and public service practitioners could all identify with. Stella advised that climate change should have a high profile within the Local Area Agreement even if it was not captured in an overt priority. It was proposed that the Local Area Agreement should show a clear link with the Climate Change Strategy.

Jenni outlined the proposed next steps proposed in the development of the Local Area Agreement, including:

- Consideration of whether specific priorities should be focussed on particular communities of interest or specific cline groups
- An exercise with data experts to understand the baseline data for the indicators associated with the emerging priorities. This would help prepare for the process of negotiating targets with government
- Consideration of the feedback from central government (via Government Office West Midlands) to understand relative priorities

Action: Jenni Venn to ensure that the next stage of the draft Local Area Agreement documentation highlights the cross cutting relationships and shows where priorities link to other specific strategies and plans.

Mark Tovey, Government Office West Midlands, outlined the general expectations of central government departments regarding the development of the new Local Area Agreements. Mark explained the central government departments were seeking reassurance and evidence of each locality's progress in developing its Local Area Agreement. Central government were pressing

for the timeline to be brought forward but Mark confirmed that the Government Office recognised the need to take information through local democratic processes. It was, therefore, welcomed that Coventry had agreed to share information informally at key stages in the development of the Local Area Agreement.

Mark informed the Board that he anticipated further feedback on the emerging priorities from central government departments shortly and would liaise with Jos Parry, Jenni Venn and Ros Roke to interpret and communicate this information. He also advised that he planned to bring together representatives from the Coventry Partnership and the Local Authority with representatives from Government Office to discuss indicators and targets in more detail.

Stella reiterated the need for a coordinated approach to agree a clear understanding of when, where and how the Local Area Agreement would be signed off. She confirmed that Coventry would move forward as fast as possible but that the process would need to recognise local processes and ensure the involvement of Councillors and, particularly, representatives from the voluntary and community sectors.

Jos Parry, Coventry City Council requested further information on how the target setting process would be managed. Mark advised that there was no further guidance at this stage.

Jenni Venn, Coventry City Council, confirmed that issues of equality and community cohesion issues would be embedded within the Local Area Agreement and its associated delivery plans. Jenni informed the Board that Coventry had been asked to present details of this approach to the Department for Communities and Local Government and to the Audit Commission as it was seen as an example of good practice.

Actions:

- **Jos Parry and Jenni Venn to arrange a seminar for elected members.**
- **Jos Parry, Ros Roke and Mark Tovey to arrange a meeting between representatives from Government Office West Midlands and members of the Coventry Partnership.**

This meeting has since been confirmed as 8 February at Government Office. Jos Parry, Ros Roke and Jenni Venn will represent the views of the Coventry Partnership and Coventry City Council (following more detailed discussions with theme group leaders, expert advisors to theme groups and appropriate officers within the Council).

4. Emerging Findings from NRF Succession Planning

Adrian Coles and Priti Bhadwara from the City Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Team, outlined the succession framework process and the evaluation work currently being undertaken by GLA (Greater London Authority) Consulting. Adrian highlighted a range of generic issues which had been identified through the evaluation process so far:

- There were some potentially transferable models in the use of IT, such as the use of hand held technology to improve environmental services
- There had been good evidence of partnership working. For example, the development of a choice based letting initiative

- There had been differing levels of strategic engagement across theme groups
- The sharing of performance management information across themes should be improved
- There had been mixed experiences of multi-agency working and buy in from stakeholders
- The work/projects undertaken so far could provide a useful platform for future change in mainstream services and/or service delivery

Stella voiced her concern that the evaluation only appeared to present positive points and did not highlight any learning from things that had not been so successful. Adrian confirmed that the full evaluation provided a more detailed picture and that this could be made available to the Local Public Service Board.

Members of the Board recognised that the NRF evaluation may identify some important strategic issues and would require a fuller discussion.

Priti went on to outline some of the main elements of learning from the NRF evaluation which could inform the development and delivery of the emerging priorities for the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement. The examples presented included:

- Client tracking as part of LEGI (Local Enterprise Growth Initiative). The process had identified and rectified gaps in the system and areas of client fall out
- The relationship between ex-offenders, re-offending rates and housing provision
- Various examples of partnership working contributing effectively to the core business priorities of the organisations involved
- The relationship between English language classes for new communities and future training opportunities
- The rapid risk assessment process for priority neighbourhoods developed within the midwifery project and the potential for this work to inform the delivery of other services in priority neighbourhoods
- The legislative driver for a coordinated housing letting scheme for Registered Social Landlords

Stella thanked Priti for the overview and advised the Board of some recent feedback from elected members which had indicated that some of the most vulnerable people in Coventry were finding it difficult to access the online system for the housing letting scheme. Stella highlighted that there may be some issues related to equalities which would need to be explored in more detail through an equality impact assessment.

It was also recognised that senior representatives from many partners organisations were closely involved with some Theme Groups but that the Partnership still needed to identify where the Theme Groups were not benefiting from the sustained strategic engagement of senior staff. It was confirmed that the Board would need details of where lack of strategic engagement was a concern in order to exert the appropriate pressure. Members of the Board confirmed that they would like to consider some of the points in more detail at a future meeting.

Priti confirmed that a final evaluation report would be available in late February. Cllr Ken Taylor, Coventry City Council, advised that the evaluation should identify the rate and/or level of improvement in order to identify the areas of greatest benefit.

Stella recommended that the evaluation should identify those actions that could improve something for a large number of people or those actions which achieve a great improvement for a small group of very vulnerable or disadvantaged people.

Adrian went on to present some of the issues for potential service re-design which had been identified through the evaluation to date and explained that the NRF sub-group had made a decision that the NRF should have a managed under-spend. Adrian confirmed that this under-spend could be anything up to £1m. The key condition which would be placed on the use of this funding would be that it should be used for activities that support the redesign services in priority neighbourhoods (in line with the ethos of NRF).

Action:

- **Adrian and Priti to send Stella a summary of the overall learning from the evaluation.**
- **Adrian and Priti to bring a detailed report to a forthcoming meeting of the Local Public Service Board. The report should identify which areas would benefit the most from pump prime funding to support ongoing service re-design.**

5. Update on the Area Based Grant

The Board considered the latest information about the Area Based Grant presented in a paper by Barry Hastie, Interim Head of Financial Management, Coventry City Council. This paper had been brought back to the Board for fuller discussion following its initial consideration at the last meeting.

Barry advised that there had been no further information on any of the specific funding streams. Barry confirmed that the Area Based Grant allocation had been announced for the next three years but that this was not new funding and was already largely committed to existing projects and through ongoing contractual arrangements. Barry confirmed that there was some further work to be undertaken to understand the details of existing commitments and pressures in order to identify any flexibility within the Area Based Grant.

Barry explained that the paper proposed three potential options for allocating the Area Based Grant, which included:

1. Capping existing allocations where these allocations remain stable or increase
2. Consider more comprehensive reductions in some programme areas subject to an assessment of existing commitments and priorities
3. Instigate an approval process for spending where new or increasing allocations have been notified

Members of the Board acknowledged that it would be difficult to identify any flexibility for the coming financial year at a simple proportional level. The allocation would need to be considered line by line to identify any flexibility in specific areas. Jos Parry, Coventry City Council, highlighted that the key areas of flexibility were likely to be around the Working Neighbourhoods transitional funding, the underspend in the NRF budget and the ongoing LEGI (Local Enterprise Growth Initiative) funding.

Deborah Harrod, West Midlands Police, confirmed that she would support a more specific approach to identifying budget flexibilities as it should be recognised that some areas would have experienced significant reductions in budget over recent years.

Stella concluded that the exercise would require detailed consultation and advised that her own view was that 2008/2009 would be a transitional year, with the Partnership highlighting the priorities which it would like to focus resources on, whilst still undertaking the detailed work to identify exactly where the resources would come from.

Jos Parry, Coventry City Council, reiterated the need to give the message that partners and departments should not plan to spend the entire budgets announced in the Area Based Grant.

Mark Tovey, Government Office West Midlands, advised that the Government would be looking for a radical review of budget setting procedures to show how Coventry will respond to the opportunities presented in the White Paper. The Partnership would need to show how new processes would lead to significant changes by 2009/2010. Stella advised that radical change would take time and reiterated that 2008/2009 would be a transition year.

Jos Parry, Coventry City Council, asked Mark to communicate to central Government colleagues that individual correspondence regarding funding was not at all helpful as it would make introducing flexibility very difficult.

Barry concluded by explaining that the Area Based Grant was one of various funding streams which could be used to deliver the Local Area Agreement but that other mainstream funding could be part of the overall package.

6. Any Other Business

Mark Tovey, Government Office West Midlands, updated members of the Board on the latest information about Local Area Agreement demonstration areas. Jos confirmed that Coventry had proposed that Children and Young People should be its Local Area Agreement theme. Stella affirmed that this was an area in which Coventry was seen as flexible and innovative.