



Coventry Partnership Operations Group – 10 October 2007

Present:

Stella Manzie, Coventry City Council (Chair)
Les Ratcliffe, Jaguar Cars and Land Rover
Ros Roberts, Coventry Partnership
Peter Shearing, Learning and Skills Council
Chief Supt Debbie Harrod, West Midlands Police
Stephen Jones, Coventry PCT
Richard Monk, Whitefriars Housing Group
Sheila Bates, CEN
Steve Banbury, CVSC

Apologies:

Cllr Tony O'Neill, Coventry City Council
Cllr Ram Lakha, Coventry City Council

In Attendance:

Paula Deas, Regeneration Services, Coventry City Council
Rebecca Young, Regeneration Services, Coventry City Council
Jo Sandford, Consultant

1. Welcome and Introductions

Stella welcomed everybody to the meeting and the colleagues in attendance introduced themselves and explained why they were involved in the meeting.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. Update on the Development of the SCS and LAA

Stella updated the group on the positive feedback from the Partnership Board workshop event which had taken place earlier in the day. Ros explained the next steps in the process of developing the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and reminded the group that a Draft SCS Outcomes and Priorities document would be presented at the Partnership Board meeting on 7 November 2007 to be agreed for public consultation.

4. Update on Local Employer Partnerships

Stella explained what Local Employer Partnerships were and what they aimed to achieve.

Local Employer Partnerships are commitments by employers to help disadvantaged people compete for their vacancies. Local Employer Partnerships will be applicable to larger employers with significant recruitment potential. Coventry City Council was the first LA in the West Midlands to sign up.

It was proposed to put the initiative to the Coventry Partnership Board to inform the partnership of the concept of Local Employer Partnerships and encourage involvement in the initiative. It was recognised that many of the long term aspirational targets in the SCS could be achieved through Local Employer Partnerships.

Action:

- **Ros to work with Jane Beaver to take a practically focussed request to Board members with contact details for any employers who would be willing to be involved**

5. Private Sector Engagement with the Coventry Partnership

Les introduced Jo Sandford and explained the background to Jo's report. It had been recognised that it would be beneficial to create a direct route for business to engage with the Coventry Partnership. Jo was commissioned to undertake a short project to explore the range of business networks in Coventry and to propose a useful mechanism for these groups to come together and further encourage private sector engagement in the Partnership. Les recommended that the item should go to the Partnership Board by way of an update.

The group received a presentation and report from Jo Sandford. Jo reported that there was support from business to engage with the Partnership at a number of levels;

- a) Strategically, though the Partnership Board and by responding to large scale consultations such as the SCS
- b) The contribute of expertise and practical involvement in theme groups and their activities
- c) Involvement in specific projects, particularly at neighbourhood level and those aimed at tackling disadvantage

Jo proposed that the Partnership establish a Business Group made up of representatives from the business forums which exist in the city e.g. the Chamber of Commerce and Business in the Community. It was recommended that the network managers should be used as the conduit to reach the wider business community. It was recognised that the presentation and communication of information would be key to encouraging increased engagement from business. It was proposed that the Business Group be chaired by a private sector representative from the Partnership Board, initially Les Ratcliffe, and meet prior to Partnership Board meetings. This would help ensure a more representative private sector view was brought to meetings of the Partnership Board.

The establishment of a virtual committee (made up of business organisations from across the city) would also allow the Partnership to consult a wider representative group on issues such as the SCS and other large scale consultations. It was recognised that businesses were involved in a wide range of activities across the city but that their work was not necessarily aligned with the priorities of the Partnership. The Business Group could help shape Theme Groups' requests for business support in activities and promote opportunities through its member organisations. Theme Groups would need to be clear on how to present their priorities.

Jo highlighted that it would take significant resource to establish, support and administer the Business Group and that timescales for the availability of information may need to improve. The group were referred to the draft terms of reference for the Business Group.

There was a discussion around the proposed membership of the Business Group, the proposed interaction with Theme Groups and the responsibility for the administration of the Group. It was recognised that there was a need to publicise existing opportunities for community groups to engage with business more effectively through CVSC and CEN.

Stella explained that she would like to see the administration of the Business Group organised through the Partnership Secretariat and that the Partnership may want to start using the Business Group from the top down i.e. from the Board, very quickly.

Action:

- **Les and Jo Sandford to present the report to the Board on 7 November 2007**
- **Ros to cross check business involvement with the Council's Business Investment Team and establish an ongoing link with this team**
- **Ros to contact other LSPs to explore how business forums are used in their work**

6. Draft Economic Development Strategy

The group received a summary of the Draft Economic Development Strategy and an associated briefing note. Rebecca Young and Paula Deas, Regeneration Services, Coventry City Council, presented the key elements of the draft strategy and directed the group to consider the consultation questions which it was proposed the Partnership Board should consider.

The White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' restated the importance of economic development, alongside the recognition that the planned growth of Coventry needed to ensure benefit for individuals. The Chamber of Commerce, the LSC and Job Centre Plus had been involved in the development of the draft strategy and it was explained that the vision articulated within the strategy was also the LSP's vision.

Four main goals were proposed in the draft strategy (outlined in section 8) and there was an associated set of milestones to be reached by 2012. Some of the deficiencies in the existing draft, such as the lack of points about skills and the need to make it more unique to Coventry, were also highlighted. The Shadow Economic Development Board has agreed that a consultation process should be planned and have recommended that the draft strategy be taken to the Partnership Board. Paula and Rebecca proposed that all partners should be asked to support the strategy and were aware that their team needed to coordinate with the consultation on the SCS.

There was a discussion around what the Partnership Board should be asked to consider specifically in relation to the draft strategy. It was recognised that there was a need to raise awareness of the growth agenda and the planned economic regeneration to enable other partners to be aspirational when proposing their thematic outcomes. The group felt that the consultation questions were a little bland and that the Partnership Board could be asked to explore what Coventry wants to be known for in the future and who the city would need to attract and/or develop in terms of business and skills.

Stella also questioned the role of the Shadow Economic Development Board and reiterated that the Theme Groups should provide the specific strategic role within the Partnership structure.

Actions:

- **Ros to send Stella the papers on the governance role of the Shadow Economic Development Board for consideration**
- **Stella, Ros, Paula and Rebecca to agree how to present the draft strategy to the Partnership Board before the final agenda for 7 November was confirmed**

7. Agenda for Partnership Board Meeting – 7 November 2007

It was agreed that the agenda of the next Coventry Partnership Board meeting would focus on economic development issues including:

- Local Employer Partnerships – Jane Beaver
- Private sector engagement with the Coventry Partnership – Les Ratcliffe and Jo Sandford
- SCS Draft Outcomes and Priorities for Consultation – Jenni Venn and Ros Roberts
- The worked example of the Draft Economic Development Strategy – Carl Pearson, Rebecca Young/Paula Deas

8. Coventry Partnership Secretariat Funding

The group received an oral report and an associated paper from Ros Roberts.

It was highlighted that NRF funding currently supported three Partnership Support Officer roles and the Communications Officer role within the Secretariat. NRF funding would cease in March 2008 and there was a need to consider the future role of the Secretariat and likely funding requirements, particularly for staffing. Debbie Harrod advised that funding provided by the Police currently came from BCU funding which would also cease in 2008.

Action:

- **Ros to discuss the situation with Stella, Jos Parry and Les in further detail and report back to the Operations Group, including a detailed breakdown of costs to include staffing and running costs**

9. Any Other Business

No further points were raised.

Action:

- **Ros to circulate the dates and venues of forthcoming Operations Group meetings**

