

Cabinet

16 November 2011

County Durham Partnership Review



Report of Corporate Management Team

Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Cllr. Simon Henig, Leader of the Council

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Cabinet with an overview of the County Durham Partnership (CDP) Away Day which took place on Wednesday 7 September 2011.

Background

2. The CDP Board asked the Strategic Delivery and Improvement Group (SDIG) to look at how, in the present climate, the Partnership might be more efficient and help to ensure improved outcomes are achieved with fewer resources. This piece of work helped to frame the agenda for the Away Day.

CDP Away Day

Introduction

3. The CDP Away Day was held with the aim of focusing on four key questions, which were agreed at the July CDP Board meeting:
 - a) What is changing in the partnership landscape?
 - b) How do we make our actions more effective?
 - c) How do we improve our understanding of localities?
 - d) What type of partnership do we want the CDP to be?
4. The Board considered the significant changes faced by the Partnership and local communities following the election in May 2010. These included policy changes, which had removed the statutory requirement for an LSP and much of the compulsion to work in partnership allowing more freedom of choice and established a programme of reform in almost all areas of operation; structural changes, which had seen the abolition of ONE and GONE and set in train fundamental changes related to both Health and Policing; and the increased pressures on local people, including unemployment, rising costs and service changes.
5. A review of the Board and each of the thematic partnerships within the CDP showed that there had been impressive achievements over the last year. All partnerships had responded well to significant reductions in funding and had ensured that they are well placed to meet new policy requirements without losing sight of the priorities and objectives set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Indeed, during a period of intense change, improvements in performance had still been achieved and

Board members noted a feeling of confidence of adapting working together to help face the challenges ahead.

6. The AAPs, which are a key part of the CDP, have also become embedded over the last year and have had a significant impact on the extent to which local people feel they can influence public sector decisions. A recent review of AAPs by a cross-party working group of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Board found that AAPs have delivered projects that have addressed both locally agreed AAP priorities and also the strategic priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy of the County Durham Partnership.
7. Through discussions the Board agreed that the CDP had achieved a lot since Vesting Day including the successful transition from eight former Local Strategic Partnerships to the existing CDP; a shared Sustainable Community Strategy, action plan and performance management framework; a fully established structure with Board, Thematic Partnerships, Forum and AAPs and the highest achievement in Performance Reward Grant in the region. Achievements against the five SCS priorities were also highlighted.

Altogether wealthier

8. The private sector is now much more involved and integral to the Economic Partnership and priority has been given to education and skills including 'Learning the Business' which is regarded as best practice by members of the NELEP. Other partners have taken on a greater role including Job Centre Plus and the University, which is seen as very positive. A new approach being taken to Procurement is being received positively by SMEs in the County. Another positive outcome for the County's economy is the attraction of Hitachi and the further developments at NETPark and Durhamgate.

Altogether better for children and young people

9. The Children's Trust has given more prominence to children and families which has given them improved outcomes and a greater emphasis with other services, putting them at the centre of all of their plans and activities. Strategic planning and performance monitoring is now done on an inter-agency basis. These Plans are now driving single agency work and joint commissioning which has led to improved outcomes and savings as a result of new approaches to services, including short breaks for children with disabilities which can show a saving of over £1M. The Family Pathfinders Programme, introduced in 2009 which involved partners from Health, Children and Young People's Services and Adults Wellbeing and Health was very successful in improving outcomes for children, young people and their families. These included a reduction in violence within the family and fewer families living in debt. Another achievement of the Children's Trust is the increase year on year in GCSE at grade A*-C which has gone from 6% below the national average to 2.4% above in the last five years.

Altogether healthier

10. The Health and Wellbeing Partnership has promoted full engagement of all sectors that represent local people, including the voluntary and community sector through Health Networks. Through close working with AAPs across the County duplication has been removed and joint groups now exist between the Networks and AAPs. The Partnership has developed two robust evidence based Delivery Plans and co-ordinated, monitored and performance managed so that service improvements have

been delivered and targets met with 78% of objectives on target and making solid progress. The Partnership has also linked together national, regional and local strategies relating to health and wellbeing.

Altogether safer

11. The overall crime and ASB rate in County Durham has reduced by 11%. The Safe Durham Partnership has taken a new approach to dealing with domestic abuse through the implementation of MARAC which has seen a significant reduction in repeat offences. It has also successfully implemented the Total Home Safety Project with many homes across the County made safer and the positive impact being felt by local communities. The reduction of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System by 71% has received national recognition and awards with the affect of this impacting upstream. The new Integrated Offender Management programme has also been rolled out across the County which is the successor to the successful Prolific and Priority Offender scheme which saw a 45% reduction in the re-offending of people on the scheme. The numbers of drug users in effective treatment has also increased.

Altogether greener

12. The Environment Partnership has worked hard to raise awareness and get local people involved through working in communities, supported by communications and campaigns and delivered a large programme of activities with a noticeable difference evident in localities, including reducing ASB and enviro-crime. The Partnership has worked with schools on a number of programmes to educate young people on a range of environmental issues. It has helped to increase recycling by 10% over the last two years and eliminated illegal waste sites. It has also held an annual event for the last two years to celebrate World Environment Day and relaunched the Environment Awards. The Tidy Business Awards Scheme has been launched across the County and the Chair of the Partnership has also been involved in the development of the new Keep Britain Tidy national campaign 'Love Where You Live', the only Local Authority chosen to be involved at the development stage.

General Discussion

13. Following presentations by the chair of each of the Thematic Partnerships there was a general discussion, during which a number of important issues were raised, including:
 - a) The role the Partnership can play in bridging the gap between good achievements at Key Stage 4 and employability.
 - b) The balance between the supply of labour and the demand for labour.
 - c) The need for the economy to remain as the top priority.
 - d) The important role the Partnership plays in establishing links between key people.
 - e) The need to bring in learning from other areas.
 - f) The fact that the voluntary and community sector in County Durham wants to be part of the solution.

Work of the Strategic DIG

14. Lorraine O'Donnell outlined the work of the SDIG, demonstrating how the group had looked at the effectiveness of the CDP Board and whether Board members are clearly sighted on how strategic decisions are playing out within localities by testing the role the Partnership currently plays in:

- Assessing,
- Planning,
- Doing and
- Reviewing.

15. This work had resulted in the following proposals being put forward to help the Partnership be more effective and achieve improved outcomes with fewer resources:

Assessing:

- a) Single assessment
- b) Shared description of localities
- c) An assessment of the challenges facing local communities, from their perspective

Planning:

- d) Agreed priority places
- e) A balanced focus on both the strategic and the local

Doing:

- f) A coordinated approach to localities
- g) A shared understanding that partnership working is primarily driven by individual organisations

Reviewing:

- h) A new approach to performance management – ensuring that the Board monitors and manages what is important to County Durham.
- i) Ensuring that the Board has the right approach and membership to address what is important.

Group Work

16. During the Away Day the Board split into three working groups to consider the following questions:

- i. Do we still believe that a common vision is required? If so, is the current vision still valid?
- ii. How can the partnership be improved? (e.g. taking action, networking, communications, information sharing)
- iii. Are the suggestions for improving action (single assessment, shared description of localities, community risk assessment, agreed priority places, coordinated approach to localities, County Durham focus) the right ones? If not what do you suggest?
- iv. How does the partnership influence / lobby beyond the County?
- v. Based on the above what are the top three things you think the CDP Board should focus on?

17. Following the Group Work a feedback session was held to consider the key issues discussed.

18. The feedback highlighted the following strengths:

- a) All groups were very positive about how partnership working has developed across the whole CDP and felt it was now in our DNA and more important than ever. It is about more than just meetings and ties together our priorities,

creating a coherent and holistic way of thinking and addressing challenges together.

- b) The Partnership's Vision is appropriate as it still reflects current needs and aspirations and each thematic partnership has successfully amended their action plan to reflect policy changes and a reduction in resources.
- c) We have a strong partnership Board. The size and continuity of the Board's membership has enabled a collective memory to be developed and helped to build greater trust between partners.
- d) The CDP has helped to achieve significant improvements, including £6.6m in Performance Reward Grant, which has provided the resources for Lumiere; been recognised for establishing positive links between education and skills for business; achieved improvements and savings with new schemes such as breaks for children with disabilities and helped to achieve the year on year improvements in GCSE at grade A*-C which has gone from 6% below the national average to 2.4% above in the last five years; driven forward service improvements and helped to ensure that 78% of Health objectives are on target; helped to reduce overall crime, achieved an 11% reduction anti-social behavior and received national recognition for work to reduce first time entrants into the Youth Justice System by 71%; increased the number of people actively taking pride in their area and helped to increase recycling by 10% over the last two years; and engaged with more than 5,000 local residents, which has helped to improve the percentage of residents who feel they can influence decisions from just over 20% to almost 40%.

19. In addition to continuing the present approach and building on the achievements already realised, the feedback also highlighted the following key areas for further improvement and a number of new areas of work for the Partnership, including:

- a) Reaffirmation and promotion of the Vision and the economy as the top priority to help the Partnership to play more effectively into the North East LEP.
- b) A focus on a selected number of priority places and the development of a common description of localities. This approach will help the Board to build on its present work and positive achievements, assess how strategic decisions are playing out in local communities and allow resources to be used more effectively.
- c) A focus on a small number of key issues, which cut across the work of all thematic partnerships. It was suggested that housing provision may be one of these issues as many of the priorities being driven forward by thematic partnerships link to housing in some way.
- d) More space for horizon scanning and scenario planning and the opportunity to think creatively.
- e) Using Board members' existing networks to influence and lobby and promoting the Partnership's work through an improved communications strategy. An annual event with MPs and others was also proposed.

Concluding Comments

20. Cllr. Henig thanked everyone for their contributions and highlighted the important role the AAPs now play, especially as they have access to funding and local resources, which with additional matched funding can be quite considerable and could be aligned more with the work of thematic partnerships. The CDP Forum is therefore an important opportunity to ensure strong links are established between the Board, thematic partnerships and AAPs.
21. Other suggestions put forward included:
 - a) Circulating AAP Annual Reports to the Board.
 - b) The agendas of Forums and Board meetings to provide more space for periodic updates from thematic partnerships and AAPs.
 - c) Providing the opportunity and the space for the Board to think creatively.
 - d) Inviting speakers to Board meetings to give a different perspective on the issues we face.
 - e) Synthesizing our key messages.
 - f) Consider approaching the Institute of Local Governance for support.
 - g) Give further consideration to the involvement of a housing provider within the CDP.
 - h) Looking at the challenges facing local people from their perspective.
 - i) The need to be clear about the resource implications of doing more with less money available.

Action Plan

22. The collective views of the Board outlined in paragraphs 13, 19 and 21 capture the key actions that are now needed to take partnership working forward in County Durham building on the strong foundations that have been developed over the last two years. A draft Action Plan has been developed following the meeting and will be discussed in more detail by the SDIG at future meetings.

Next Steps

23. The feedback from the Away Day, with a clear list of proposals to help the Board move forward, was discussed at the Board meeting on 20 September 2011 where the draft action plan was also discussed. Regular updates on the Action Plan will be discussed at the Board in the future.

Recommendations:

24. Cabinet is asked to:
 - a) Note the content of the report.
 - b) Agree to receive further updates.

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - Area and Neighbourhood budgets are utilised and delivered through the 14 AAPs.

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - Altogether safer is the responsibility of the Safe Durham Partnership.

Human Rights - None

Consultation - The County Durham Partnership framework is a key community engagement and consultation function of the Council and its partners.

Procurement - None

Disability Issues - None

Legal Implications - None