

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

28 April 2014

Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future - a review of Durham County Council's Area Action Partnerships – final update



Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Members of the sign off by Corporate Issues OSC on 19th February of the scrutiny review of Area Action Partnerships – 'Fit for purpose, Fit for the future'.

Background

2. In 2011, Overview and Scrutiny undertook a review of Area Action Partnerships (AAPs), to examine practices and processes, areas for improvement, whether they were "fit for purpose" and, in the context of the Government's Localism agenda and public sector funding reductions, "fit for the future."
3. The review concluded that AAPs had made immense progress from their inception, but that there was more to do and that it was essential that the Council, its partners and local communities continue to support them in striving for an 'Altogether Better Durham'.
4. Fourteen recommendations were agreed, following a wide-ranging review which included strengthening AAP terms of reference, a stronger approach to training, stronger approaches to engaging a wide range of partners including County Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, the local media, and local community groups, improved learning from good practice and improved performance reporting. The report was taken to Cabinet who agreed to progress the recommendations, including reaffirming the role of AAPs as a key mechanism through which the Council and partners consult upon service and policy reviews.
5. A systematic update on the progress of the recommendations was provided to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 26th July 2012 as part of the County Durham Partnership update report. There was also a recommendation within the report to carry out a follow on scrutiny review. However, following positive feedback from the Corporate Peer Challenge which also took place in July 2012, it was agreed that a further scrutiny review of AAPs would not be necessary.
6. It was therefore decided that a final update on the recommendations of the scrutiny review would be provided during 2013/14.

Final outcome of the scrutiny review recommendations

7. The report presented to Corporate Issues OSC on 19th February provided a final update on the recommendations of the original scrutiny review. Members noted that there remained two of the recommendations for which ongoing work would be taking place. These were in respect of:

- a. AAP project funding arrangements and linkages with the developing performance management framework;
 - b. The development of the AAP Performance Management Framework and how the County Durham Partnership/AAP conference can be utilised as a means of sharing best practice across AAPs.
8. The report also drew attention to the findings of the July 2012 peer challenge which showed the positive progress achieved, with particular comments:
- The AAPs are a powerful demonstration of the determination and ability of the new council to deliver a fresh approach to involving its communities;
 - The AAPs have moved rapidly from 'idea' to 'implementation', they have a strong focus on action and proportionate local partnerships;
 - They have a clear partnership governance structure;
 - Partner agencies are generally involved and supportive;
 - The peer team's broad conclusion is that AAPs are sound, valued and have exceeded early expectations.
9. Members indicated that, whilst they were mindful to sign off the AAP review, it would be necessary to continue to monitor the progress of addressing the outstanding recommendations and also monitor the progress of the AAPs generally. It was agreed that this was best done through the County Durham Partnership updates which are periodically considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, which include regular information on AAP activity. These reports would provide an ongoing opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny to monitor the progress of the AAPs and their activity whilst also enabling the progress against outstanding AAP Review recommendations to be examined.
10. Notwithstanding this, the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny members have also expressed a continued desire to retain the AAPs on their work programme.
11. The final update on the recommendations can be found at Appendix 2.

Recommendations

12. Members are requested to:
- a. Note the information in this report;
 - b. Agree that progress and performance of AAPs can be monitored through the regular County Durham Partnership Updates which are presented to OSMB;
 - c. Agree that Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee retains the AAPs on their work programme.

Background papers: Overview and Scrutiny review of AAPs 'Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future'.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - None

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation – None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues - None

Legal Implications - None

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| <p>particular AAP area then every effort should be made to ensure that those Town and Parish Councils have an equal opportunity to become involved with their respective AAP;</p> | <p>as referenced in the Jan 2014 issue of Durham Association News. Links will continue with CDALC to discuss future link opportunities. In areas where Town and Parish Councils are not affiliated arrangements have been made to include non CDALC affiliated members to the board e.g. Weardale Action Partnership.</p> <p>Any future changes to be reflected upon.</p> | | |
| <p>(vi) the key actions identified within the internal review of AAP project funding (Section 5.78 of the main report refers) be implemented, particularly in respect of those areas of training and development identified.</p> | <p>Members seminar held May 2012. Funding Team manned a stand during information week at County Hall to disseminate info and be on hand to answer any queries. Gordon Elliott, Andrew Megginson and Marie Moore delivered documentation which was made available to new members.</p> <p>In addition to the above, an Audit Assurance review was conducted by Internal Audit to look at the processes used and also to consider how best to monitor completed projects given the breadth and number of projects that have been funded. This work led by Andrew Barnes from Internal Audit was conducted between Feb – May 2012 and a detailed action plan was put in place to deal with additional recommendations arising out of this Audit led review. This was implemented and signed off by Internal Audit in October 2013.</p> | <p>Andrew Megginson</p> | <p>Complete</p> |
| <p>(vii) Cabinet in determining its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) take into consideration any financial allocation to the AAPs, the value that AAP Area Budget(AB) and Neighbourhood Budget(NB) have brought by way of matched funding opportunities namely, that each £1 of AB funding generates an average of £1.39 matched funding and each £1 of NB funding generates an average of £1.75 matched funding.</p> | <p>Budget for 2014/15 has kept AAP levels the same as at 2012.Capital/Revenue split now monitored to ensure minimum impact on the council's revenue budget, Regular financial updates provided to AAP boards.</p> <p>Assurance audit for AB/NB processes has taken place.</p> <p>AAPs engaged attendees in the recent 2013 MTFP exercise – high levels of feedback and engagement.</p> | <p>Gordon Elliott</p> | <p>Complete</p> |
| <p>(viii) AAPs look to develop the level of engagement and activity with the press and other media by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively engaging with Town and Parish Councils | <p>More AAPs using different mediums for engagement than ever before. Increased usage of facebook for example.</p> <p>Local AAPs responsible for local press opportunities.</p> | <p>Lee Copeland</p> | <p>Complete</p> |

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| <p>and utilising their publications to evidence and raise awareness of AAP activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing relationships between AAP Boards and Co-ordinators with local media. • Liaising with community groups/residents associations. • Including dedicated AAP pages within Durham County News. • further enhancing AAP activity via new ways of working using the Internet, Facebook, Twitter and SMS Messaging. | <p>e-bulletins/newsletters produced for each AAP.</p> <p>Distinct press contacts for each AAP to enable direct links with regional press.</p> <p>Usage of local radio stations.</p> <p>Dedicated pages within Durham County News.</p> | | |
| <p>(ix) that the AAP project funding approval, appraisal process and application forms include a requirement that reports be submitted to AAP Boards on a quarterly basis detailing project progress.</p> | <p>New documentation complete.</p> <p>Suite of outputs complete.</p> <p>Board reports subject to new performance management framework for AAPs to adhere to in order to be in a stronger position to track project outcomes during project delivery and to ensure timescales are met.</p> | <p>Andrew Megginson Marie Moore</p> | <p>Performance management framework from April 2014 after advice and consultancy work from internal audit.</p> |
| <p>(x) performance reports for AAP activity be shared with the wider AAP Forum membership and that the AAPs further develop the process of publication and reporting of the delivery of and impact made by AAP projects against local priorities. That the 14 AAPs come together in an annual conference to celebrate their achievements and successes in this respect.</p> | <p>As above and linked to the enhanced work around performance reporting.</p> <p>Conference held October 2011. 2nd conference held October 2012 – focus of 2nd conference around best practice sharing. Attended by peer challenge colleagues.</p> <p>Further work in planning stages to investigate the potential for joint CDP/AAP conference in order to strengthen links and share best practice.</p> <p>Held County wide Participatory Budgeting events – October – Dec 2013 to increase awareness, share best practice and increase AAP forum membership.</p> | <p>Andrew Megginson</p> <p>Lee Copeland</p> <p>Lee Copeland/ Sandy Denney</p> | <p>Complete plus additional work post April 2014</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>October 2014 – tbc following further investigation</p> <p>Complete</p> |
| <p>(xi) AAPs undertake further work in conjunction with the ACE Planning and Performance team to enhance the</p> | <p>Linked to AAP input to CDP report to cabinet which is circulated to all board members as a tool to share best</p> | <p>Andrew Megginson</p> | <p>Complete</p> |

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| reporting of performance management information and indicators. | practice. Also linked to recommendations (ix) and (x) above | | |
| (xii) the learning and evidence of good practice detailed within this review report be shared by AAP co-ordinators and their respective Chairs across all 14 AAPs and that bespoke improvement plans for each AAP be produced for example engagement with young people, options for broadening representation. | Learning of good practice identified through the report of the scrutiny working group disseminated through presentations at all 14 AAPs Complete skills audit for AAP boards All AAPs to develop project case studies to ensure sharing of best practice across all 14 AAPs. | Lee Copeland Andrew Megginson Shealagh Pearce | Complete Complete Complete (at 2012 conference) |
| (xiii) the Council's Equalities and Diversity Team run a seminar with all 14 AAPs to develop an action plan to ensure that equality considerations are embedded in AAP practice and procedures evidencing the good practice that already exists. | Equality and Diversity training seminar delivered to all 14 AAP co-ordinators at PACE away day. The new funding application form containing revised E&D questions has been presented to co-ordinators for future use. | Shealagh Pearce | Complete Complete |
| (xiv) an initial response to these recommendations is brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board within six months; and that Cabinet agree to a review of the AAPs in another 2 years. | A systematic review of the recommendations was presented to OSMB on 26 th July 2012 as part of the County Durham Partnership Update report. It was also agreed that due to the Peer Challenge carried out in July 2012 which contained positive feedback re AAPs, it was not necessary to carry out a further review, recommendation (xiv), however a final systematic review of recommendations would be presented to CIOSC on 19 th February 2014. | | |