

WIRRAL LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE BOARD**WEDNESDAY 30th JUNE 2010****REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE****COMPREHENSIVE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY – TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION****1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The report provides Wirral LSP Executive board members with an update on progress with implementation of the Comprehensive Engagement Strategy, 2009 - 2011 and the four key areas that were identified for action.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Strategy was adopted by the Executive Board at its meeting, November 2009. It provides a framework within which Wirral's LSP will work to create a new environment for partnership development and working. The Strategy did not seek to develop new structures for engagement, but aimed to build on and enhance existing arrangements.

The vision of the Strategy is:

To increase the involvement of people in the life of their communities and encourage their greater participation in the decision-making processes that affect their quality of life and the services they receive from all partners of the LSP.

Additionally, the CES was to support delivery of Wirral's Sustainable Community Strategy, 2008 – 2025 and;

“...a more prosperous and equal Wirral, enabling all communities and people to thrive and achieve their full potential...”

- 2.2 Four objectives were identified within the Strategy:

- Building Cohesive Communities
- Developing Procurement and Commissioning
- Sharing Best Practice
- Building Capacity



2.3 A number of National Performance Indicators were identified that would be useful in helping to determine the success of the Strategy:

NI 1 - % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

NI 4 - % of people who feel that they can influence decisions affecting their locality.

NI 6 - Participation in regular volunteering

NI 7 - Environment for a thriving third sector

NI 35 - Building resilience to violent extremism

National Indicator 1 has since been deleted by Government and there is uncertainty around the future of the Place Survey (National Indicators 1, 4 and 6 were measured by the Place Survey). Current performance is outlined in table 1:

Question	National Indicator number	Wirral 2008 score %	Met avg.	M'side avg.	NW avg.	Eng. avg.
People from different backgrounds get on well together	1	79.6	70.8	75.2	73.6	76.4
Can influence decisions affecting local area	4	25.5	27.2	27.9	27.4	28.9
How often gave unpaid help	6	21.2	19.9	19.0	22.2	23.2
Environment for a thriving third sector	7	15.3	-	-	-	-
Building Resilience to Violent Extremism	35	1.7	-	-	-	-

Table 1: National Performance Indicators

2.4 A number of cross cutting actions were also identified in the Strategy:

- Agreeing a common approach to engagement
- Reducing duplication of engagement activity, and
- Reducing costs

3 IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 A Strategy Steering group has been formed with membership drawn from across the Local Strategic Partnership Assembly and good progress has been made on the four objectives. Action plans are being reviewed and delivery is underway led by the following:

1. Building Cohesive Communities – Wirral Council and partners



2. Developing Procurement and Commissioning – Wirral Council and NHS Wirral
3. Sharing Best Practice – Compact Working Group
4. Building Capacity – Voluntary Community Action Wirral

Regular updates have been provided to the Assembly. A workshop at the March meeting considered how the two strands of building capacity and best practice could be developed further. This offered an opportunity to the wider membership of the Assembly to have an input into the action planning process and ideas from the workshop are reflected in the action plans. The two remaining objectives will be considered at a future meeting of the Assembly.

3.2 Progress within each of the groups is outlined below:

Community Cohesion

- Mapping of current community cohesion activities/initiatives underway; initial report end of July
- Raising awareness of issues with all stakeholders
- Monthly community tension monitoring for GONW

Procurement and commissioning

- Mapping existing contracts with the Third sector across the local authority and NHS and analysis of funding underway to ensure transparency with all funding arrangements and consistent commissioning and decommissioning activity across the sector
- Develop a Code of Practice for the commissioning and procurement of services from the voluntary sector

Sharing Best Practice

- Local event planned to bring together wider partners to raise awareness of Compact and what it means - and to contribute to delivery
- Develop VCAW website to include Compact information
- Links with funding and procurement objective to promote a mutual understanding of commissioning

Building capacity within the Third Sector

- New structures to ensure robust representation of the Third Sector – 3SA (Third Sector Assembly)
- Third sector Chief Officer's network re-established
- Opportunities for joint leadership and management training across all sectors being explored
- Volunteer practice in organisations to be identified and a strategy developed

Action plans continue to be developed even as they are implemented with a view to strengthening the focus on outcomes / impact of activity.

4 CROSS CUTTING ACTIONS

- 4.1 The Steering group has considered how a common approach to engagement may be developed across the Partnership [in order to reduce duplication and costs]. A number of challenges have been identified, for example:
- 4.2 Although there is extensive evidence of good practice across the Council and the Partnership, much engagement activity is taking place within different service areas and is based around various localities. There is little commonality in the boundaries that organisations use to involve local people; for example the Council's Area Forums, police Neighbourhood Action Groups (although these are changing to ward based meetings) Health Action Areas and Neighbourhood Management Areas are all based on different geographies.
- 4.3 A Neighbourhood Management approach offers a more intensive means of community engagement and is well established in some areas of Wirral. It has shown to be effective in involving residents and improving local environments.

Neighbourhood Agreements also referred to as community contracts or neighbourhood charters, have been developed in these areas in collaboration with local people and through a process of negotiation with service providers. The Agreements reflect priorities identified by residents in their local area. Recently, a Stronger Communities project in Morpeth Dock, led by the Community Safety Partnership, was supported by the LSP.

However, the Neighbourhood Management approach, historically, has primarily been dependent on additional sources of funding rather than mainstream.

- 4.4 Area forums are the Council's front line mechanism for engaging with local communities. Forums have some delegated funding, Funds for You, You Decide and monies from the Integrated Transport Block and local people have a say in how this is spent. In the past, Forums have produced area plans which link activity in the local area to the Local Area Agreement although the degree to which residents were involved in developing the plans is unclear. The plans are now around two years old.
- 4.5 A common approach to engagement within this current strategic and operational context obviously poses a number of challenges. Against this backdrop, a *consistent* rather than *common* approach is probably more appropriate and more feasible. This will be facilitated by an engagement database that the Council is developing, Wirral ENGAGE that will map and monitor its consultation and engagement activity and provide a tool to identify and challenge duplication. This library of data and information will promote a comprehensive understanding of engagement activity and support meaningful and targeted engagement about local priorities. The Strategy Steering group will consider how this may be rolled out across the Partnership.

5 FUTURE OPTIONS

The Partnership is operating in a significantly different environment when compared to a few months ago when the Strategy was agreed. There are many implications within the National Coalition's proposed public sector reforms for community engagement such as "Big Society" and "...giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and groups."

Implementation of the Strategy so far has shown that it provides a robust framework for partnership working in a number of very specific areas, however, a number of challenges have been identified around delivery of the cross cutting issues and some of these have been outlined in the report. Opportunity should be taken within the changing national and local context to ensure that the Strategy remains a relevant and useful tool for how the LSP wishes to further develop its engagement and empowerment activity.

The Partnership should draw further on the good practice that has been developed nationally by the Network of Empowering Authorities and others that have been successful in devolving decision making, budgets and services to more local levels, "...putting power and responsibility in the hands of every citizen."

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is requested to:

- Note progress to date on implementation of the Strategy's four objectives and agree how frequently it would like to receive future updates.
- Consider the challenges around delivery of the cross cutting actions and the drivers for review within the changing national and local context.

Jim Wilkie – Deputy Chief Executive, Wirral Borough Council

This report was prepared by Carolyn Curr, Head of Policy & Performance who can be contacted on 691 8152.