

Final Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Task Group Local Strategic Partnership 2009



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Task Group undertook a scrutiny inquiry into the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), to better understand how the LSP works with the Council and the extra value it provides linked to three objectives.

Objectives

1. To ensure the wider engagement of the Council, local Councillors and local people in the work of the Local Strategic Partnership and its thematic groups.
2. To maximise the capacity of the Local Strategic Partnership through the projects it delivers.
3. To investigate how the Local Strategic Partnership will tackle one of the big issues of the Borough, the high rate of alcohol harm related hospital admission rates and its impact on anti-social behaviour.

Desired Outcomes

1. Wider knowledge and understanding of the concept and knowledge of Chorley Partnership by both Councillors and the public, including knowing how to access information about the work of Chorley Partnership.
2. To understand and perhaps improve the process of project selection and monitoring of the Local Strategic Partnership.
3. To understand how the Local Strategic Partnership can contribute to tackling the issue of high rates of alcohol harm in Chorley.

Task Group Membership

Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair)
Councillor Nora Ball
Councillor Alan Cain
Councillor Dennis Edgerley
Councillor Marie Gray
Councillor Hasina Khan

Officer Support

Lead Officers

Lesley-Ann Fenton Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)
Claire Thompson Performance, Partnerships and Equalities Manager

Democratic Services

Carol Russell Head of Democratic Services
Dianne Scambler Democratic and Member Services Officer

Meetings

The meeting papers of the Group can be found on the Council's website: <http://www.chorley.gov.uk/scrutiny>. This includes the inquiry project outline and other relevant information on policy and procedures.

Contribution of Evidence

The Task Group would like to thank all those who have provided evidence and contributed to the Inquiry, including Allan Jones, Chair of Chorley Partnership, Cath Burns, Economic Development Manager, Chorley Council, Omar Khan, Preston United and Councillor Ken Ball, Coppull Parish Council.

Recommendations

The Executive Cabinet is asked to consider the following recommendations:

- To note that following a recommendation of the Task Group, a Member Learning Session was held for all Members of the Council on 17 November 2008, on Chorley Partnership and the work of its Thematic Groups to improve Members understanding of the LSP and to incorporate any issues from that session into the work of the Task Group.
- In order to continue to improve Members knowledge and understanding of the work of the Partnership, future information regarding LSP activity will be included in the Members e.bulletin 'intheknow'
- That links be provided in the 'intheknow' to the 'Ambition' County newsletter and the Chorley Partnership website.
- Thematic groups be encouraged to publish all their agendas and minutes on the Chorley Partnership website within 10 working days of their meetings to promote a consistent approach.
- To suggest that the Chorley Partnership concentrate on fewer projects, covering more than one of the thematic groups to achieve a greater impact on the key strategic objectives in the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- In order to increase the spend available, there is a need to attract money from other funding sources and also look at how other funding sources outside the Local Strategic Partnership eg. Funding from Lancashire Locals, could be better co-ordinated to maximise impact.
- That in recognition of the seriousness of this issue one of the Chorley Partnerships projects be to help address the major issue of alcohol related harm, possibly using all or a large part of the funding available to achieve a high impact in the Borough.
- That if Chorley Partnership decide to invest in a project relating to Chorley's alcohol harm related statistics, they be invited to come and talk to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee about their proposals about its work.
- That consideration be given to a young persons intervention programme in Chorley.

2. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Evidence

The Group received and considered several reports and documents, these included:

1. Chorley Partnership Constitution and Membership
2. Statutory Government guidance on Local Strategic Partnerships
3. Chorley Partnership Annual Report
4. IDeA Peer Review of Chorley Partnership
5. Chorley Partnership: Quarterly monitoring information
6. IDeA guidance on the effective scrutiny of Local Strategic Partnerships
7. Current approach to information sharing regarding Local Strategic Partnership activity with Members and citizens
8. Local Strategic Partnership Added Value Report
9. Chorley Partnership – Sources of Funding Report
10. Alcohol harm related statistics
11. Feedback from the recently held Member Learning Session on the work of the Chorley Partnership and its Thematic Groups
12. Lancashire County Council Overview and Scrutiny Review: Young People and Alcohol

Witnesses

The Task Group interviewed:

Mr Allan Jones, Chair of Chorley Partnership

Ms Cath Burns, Economic Development Manager, Chorley Council

Mr Omar Khan, Preston United

Councillor Ken Ball, Coppull Parish Council

Councillor Stella Walsh, Coppull Parish Council

Lancashire Police representatives:

Chief Inspector Robert Runshaw

Inspector Alison Harris

Inspector Jo Keay

Research

The Members of the Task Group attended the Member Learning Session on the work of the Chorley Partnership and its Thematic Groups held on 17 November 2008 and used feedback, questions and Member perceptions to inform their inquiry.

3. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective 1: To ensure the wider engagement of the Council, local Councillors and local people in the work of the Local Strategic Partnership and its thematic groups

From the outset of the project, members of the group recognised the need for a Member Learning Session to be held on the work of the Chorley Partnership and its thematic groups. This was consistent with a view shared by many of the Councils Members, as it had been identified by over one third of the Membership as a top knowledge requirement in their recently held Member Development and Training Questionnaire/Interviews.

The Session was held on 17 November 2008 and was well attended. Members had asked questions in relation to the following:

- Performance Indicators for the Local Area Agreement.
- Local indicators being measured through the Local Strategic Partnership (Local Area Agreement) but specific to Chorley.
- Gathering evidence with a view to demonstrating that the Families First Project does provide a more effective and co-ordinated response and also saves money by its approach.
- The process for identifying families for the Families First Project and whether or not families could refuse to be involved.
- The selection criteria/type of rural businesses that could be helped under the economic strand of the Local Strategic Partnership/key projects.
- Rural Diversification.

This was reported back to the group.

The current approach to information sharing regarding the work of the Chorley Partnership and its thematic groups with the Members and citizens of Chorley is as follows:

- A quarterly performance report on Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) activity is circulated to the Members of the Executive Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- A quarterly digest of LSP meetings including the LSP Executive, LSP Board and theme groups was circulated to all Members via email.
- The Chorley People Newsletter is sent out to all Members in the post.
- Articles on the LSP achievements have been published in the Chorley Borough News, distributed to all residents in the Borough.
- A Lancashire County Council Newsletter 'Ambition' on the Lancashire Partnership and District LSP activity is distributed to all County Councillors.
- All the agendas and minutes of the Chorley Partnership and most of its thematic groups are published (post meeting) on the Chorley Partnership website, this website can be accessed directly or from a link from the home page on Chorley Council's Website.
- To date, two Member Learning Sessions have taken place on the LSP and its activities in the six months.
- All Members had been invited to a number of ad hoc Workshops aimed at influencing LSP partnership strategies e.g. the Community Cohesion and Climate Change Strategies.

Recommendations:

- In order to continue to improve Members knowledge and understanding of the work of the Partnership, future information regarding LSP activity will be included in the Members e.bulletin 'intheknow'.
- That links be provided in the 'intheknow' to the 'Ambition' County newsletter and the Chorley Partnership website.
- All Thematic groups be encouraged to publish all their agendas and minutes within 3 working days of their meetings to promote a consistent approach.

Objective 2: Maximising Capacity of the Local Strategic Partnership by:

- increasing the funding contributions from partners
- aligning funding and projects with the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy
- considering the process used to select projects
- look at the delivery of the projects and how they have added value

An outline of the framework currently used with partners to identify key success criteria for projects and how this is used to select and then monitor the Local Strategic Partnership projects both during and at the conclusion of the projects was demonstrated to the Task Group.

Information was also provided to Members on whether the key success criteria for the Local Strategic Partnership projects commissioned in 2007/08 had been met and an officer view on whether they had 'added value'.

The Task Group received information on funding sources available to the Local Strategic Partnership. Due to Chorley's comparatively well-off position in terms of deprivation compared to the regional and national average, the Local Strategic Partnership is not eligible for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund or any other deprivation-linked funding, so there is a heavy reliance on partners contributions to resources to support the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

A summary of funding currently available to the Local Strategic Partnership was summarised as follows:

The whole Local Strategic Partnership

Chorley Council had pump primed the Chorley Partnership over the last two years with £85,000 in 2007/08 and £90,000 in 2008/09. Partners were then asked to commit resources to projects that would help deliver the SCS, this resulted in an additional £200,000 in 2007/08 being contributed, with a further £270,000 in 2008/09 from partners own reserves or through other external funding that they had generated.

A list of approved projects for 2008/09 was provided.

Community Safety Partnership

In 2008/09 the Community Safety Partnership received £71k from Lancashire County Council as part of an Area Based Grant. The partnership was also currently bidding for capital funding that had been held back by County; however it would be likely that this funding would be allocated according to those districts in most need. Chorley and South Ribble's Community Safety Partnership had recently joined together for more effective use of their combined budgets.

Chorley Local Childrens Trust

The Children's Trust had a significant amount of funding £98,000 that could be commissioned over the next three years, to the third sector to help deliver projects that would best achieve its objectives, and a one-off payment of £14,000 from the Schools Forum Fund to be spent by March 2009.

The Group received details of all the approved projects that the Chorley Partnership had accepted over the last two years.

Other Funding that was available to deliver the Community Strategy Principles included:

- Lancashire Local Funding (including the Lancashire Locals Climate Change Fund)
- Local Gateway Grants
- Central Gateway Grants
- Environment 'Community Design' Support
- Green Partnership Awards
- Small Sites Reclamation Fund
- Youth Bank (Youth Opportunity Grants, Youth Capital Grants)

Economic Investment

The Council's Economic Development Manager provided information on the promotion as Chorley as an employment area through the Economic Regeneration Strategy Support for new businesses had been praised and the number of inward investment enquiries confirmed to be strong despite the economic downturn.

The inward investment marketing activity, since the inception of the Marketing Chorley Action Plan, has resulted in an estimated £180k direct private sector leverage, and £130m private sector investment. The £180k was from associated marketing activity by HeliosSlough at the Revolution and Buckshaw Link.

The £130m private sector investment was made up of £100m from the Revolution and the rest from land adjacent to the railway station; Stump Lane; QS fashions; and a number of smaller sites.

Partner organisations' mainstream funding

The Police and NHS Central Lancashire both have resources available that could be used to invest in Local Strategic Partnership activity and are encouraged to contribute to LSP projects, in particular alcohol harm reduction initiatives.

In future the Local Strategic Partnership would be working with the partners to identify how best they could align the various funding streams with the work of the Partnership.

The Chair of the Chorley Partnership, explained to the Group that the Partnership had advanced considerably over the last eighteen months. The North West Regional Development Agency now recognised the excellent work of the partnership and that Chorley had started to promote itself much more effectively.

The Group heard that by bringing a number of partners together along with their funding, the Partnerships guiding principles had allowed them to invest in projects that had in turn brought greater benefits. There was a view that there may be greater benefit by investing in fewer projects which covered a range of aspects of a particular issue and which would have greater impact.

Forthcoming Local Area Agreement (LAA) Performance Reward Grant would create the opportunity to channel a larger investment into a specific project, helping to make a real impact in a particular area. This in turn would attract further investment from key partners.

Recommendation:

- To suggest that the Chorley Partnership concentrate on fewer projects covering more than one of the thematic groups to achieve a greater impact on key strategic objectives in the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- In order to increase the spend available there is a need to attract money from other funding sources and also look at how other funding sources outside the Local Strategic Partnership, e.g. funding from Lancashire Locals could be better co-ordinated to maximise impact.

Objective 3: Investigate how the Local Strategic Partnership will tackle one of the issues for the Borough, the high rate of alcohol harm related hospital admission rates and the impact of anti-social behaviour.

Statistics from the North West Public Health Observatory demonstrate the extent of alcohol related harm and the problems generated for Chorley:

- Chorley has one of the highest rates of alcohol related harm in Lancashire and is way above the North West and England average.
- In 2006/07 there were 2410 hospital admissions caused by alcohol (including ill health and injury), compared to a Lancashire average of 1845 admissions.
- When we compare this by population size, Chorley is 3rd worst out of Lancashire, behind Preston and Burnley. Chorley's figures are also worse than those of Blackburn and Blackpool, two significant nearby areas of deprivation.
- Compared to the North West and national averages, Chorley is significantly worse off, with rates per 100,000 of 1835 and 1384 respectively.
- In relation to crime 40.3% of all violent crime recorded in Chorley between 1 April 2006 and 30 September 2008 involved an element of alcohol.
- 20% of all anti-social behaviour recorded over the same period involved alcohol.

The Strategic Assessment currently in place highlights the fact that young people and alcohol are key strategic themes and that by addressing them in partnership could significantly reduce crime and disorder in the Borough.

The main concentration of violent crime offences are in the Town Centre and the neighbourhoods to the East and West. Other clusters of offences can be seen in the Clayton Brook and Coppull areas.

Members received a report of an Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry that had been undertaken by Lancashire County Council relating to Young People and Alcohol.

The Group invited the Project Manager at Preston United, a group that raised awareness of the dangers of alcohol to young people in Preston and tackled issues through activities for young people, mentoring, role model support and working with parents. This was a very hard hitting presentation highlighting some key issues.

- Youngsters as young as 9 are accessing alcohol
- In some cases soft carbonated drinks are more expensive to buy than alcohol and there is a willingness from some adults to purchase alcohol for children outside off licenses.
- That whilst the presentation related to Preston, the issues exist to the same extent in Chorley
- That the links from high consumption of alcohol to school absenteeism, antisocial behaviour, drugs and violence is clear.
- That a key requirement for Chorley is a dedicated male youth worker to act as a positive role model
- That the issue requires a programme of parent/guardian support as well as support for young people.
- Enforcement had a key role to play, in particular the sale of alcohol to young people.

The Task Group devoted a meeting to the consideration of Alcohol Designation Orders and Alcohol Free Zones. The Group heard evidence from local Parish Councillors about the success of the Coppull Alcohol Designation Order and also from the Police. The perception locally was that the order had had a

very positive impact in the area with few of the problems previously experienced, particularly around Coppull Leisure Centre. However the reported figures for Police calls to incidents in Coppull had not shown any marked difference – although these referred to number of incidents rather than scale of incidents.

The Group considered the benefits of having a similar order in place for Astley Park, other play and recreational grounds owned by the Council and for a town centre alcohol ban including how this might impact on the town's night time economy. It was acknowledged that such orders whilst probably effective in deterring anti-social behaviour in those areas would not necessarily reduce alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm.

Recommendations:

- That in recognition of the seriousness of the issue of alcohol related harm, the Chorley Partnership be asked to help address this through a large scale project possibly using all or a large part of the funding available to try and achieve a high impact within the Borough.
- That Chorley Partnership give consideration to a Young Persons Intervention Project.
- That if Chorley Partnership decide to invest in a project relating to Chorley's alcohol related harm statistics, they be invited to come and talk to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee about their proposals .
- That in conjunction with the Safer Chorley and South Ribble Partnership, the Executive Cabinet be asked to investigate the introduction of an Alcohol Designation Order for Astley Park; all parks and recreational grounds; and the Town Centre and that local Councillors be involved in the consultation process.