

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Local Strategic Partnership

Friday, 27 February 2009

Present: Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Councillors Dennis Edgerley, Marie Gray and Hasina Khan

Also in attendance: Cath Burns (Economic Development Manager) Mr Omar Khan (Preston United)

Officers in attendance: Lesley-Ann Fenton (Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)), Carol Russell (Head of Democratic Services) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

09.07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Nora Ball

09.08 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were declared.

09.09 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Local Strategic Partnership held on 20 January 2009 be confirmed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

09.10 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER - CATH BURNS

The Economic Development Manager, Cath Burns spoke to the Group about how Chorley is advertised as an employment area and talked the Members through the Economic Regeneration Strategy that covered the following:

- Marketing Action Plan
- Key Assets
- Economic Structure
- Future development for business investment
- Lancashire Level
- Marketing Chorley
- Target Growth Sector
- Key Stakeholders

An Action Plan for Chorley had been produced and was being marketed with a corporate strap line 'Choose Chorley for Business', this was receiving positive feedback.

An Inward Investment Pack had also been developed with key partners from the private sector and contained a virtual tour of 'Revolution', Chorley's Strategic Regional Site.

Since the Action Plan had been developed, Chorley had placed advertisement boards around the Borough, revamped the relevant web pages and the Economic

Development team had attended a number of exhibitions. The town was also promoting itself through key figure heads.

Ms Burns explained that the next stage was to draw up a position statement so that they could encourage the private sector to get more involved in promoting Chorley as a place to invest, and that they would be developing a Strategy to help take this forward. Although we are in an economic downturn, Chorley still continued to receive a high number of inward investment opportunities in the last two months.

Members asked if there were extra benefits of having the input of the Local Strategic Partnership. Ms Burns reported that the work had been a joint initiative and that Alan Jones, the Chair of the Chorley Partnership had introduced networking within the Private Sector. Some initiatives had been funded by the private sector and they had received other input such as ideas, intelligence, staffing and printing. A minimal amount of investment by the Council had generated £100,000 from the private sector.

The Chair thanked Ms Burns.

RESOLVED: - That Ms Burns produce a written summary for the next meeting to identify what leverage had actually been achieved on behalf of Chorley.

09.11 PRESTON UNITED REPRESENTATIVE - OMAR KHAN

Mr Omar Khan a representative from the organisation Preston United spoke to the Group about how they project manage a Youth Development Programme for 16 – 25 year olds in the Preston area, on preventative measures against the use of Alcohol and Cannabis.

The project was part funded by ELDAT and their costs for 2008/09 were £275,000.

The group's research had found that children as young as 9 had access to alcohol and that gangs of youths aged between 12 – 14, drank quite considerable amounts of alcohol on a daily basis, this led to associated problems including the use of guns, knives, drugs, anti-social behaviour and teenage pregnancy.

The group came up against a wide range of different issues that were having a negative impact on the situation and helping to work against achievements of the group. The group had realised that in order to change the mindset of young people they would have to address some of those issues:

Cultural Sensitivities

There was a reluctance amongst the Muslim community to accept that this was actually happening so the group had started going into the Mosque to promote their work.

Street Respect

Young people had a street respect for the criminals that were serving prison sentences for some of the petty street crime offences that they were starting to intimidate. The group needed to turn their role models into positive ones, so they looked for local people who had grown up within the community and had changed their lives around, but were still able to identify with the youths.

Parental Responsibility

Parents did not actually know where their children were when they were away from home, especially in the evenings and many parents felt that they did not want to

intervene as it would make life difficult for their child among their peers and they were also worried that it may drive their children further away from their homes and families. It is vital that parents are involved with their children and support their children involved in any programme/project/support on offer to address risky behaviour.

Availability of alcohol

One of the main problems is that alcohol is too cheap and readily available to young people making it easy for them to consume large amounts on a daily basis. In some cases soft carbonated drinks are more expensive to buy than alcohol and local people would often purchase alcohol for the youths if asked to do so in the street. The group targeted shopkeepers that sell to underage drinkers but there is little they can do about adults purchasing it for them.

School Truancy and Expulsion

Many of the children that find school difficult or have other issues in school can often play truant from school or face suspension or expulsion. The group started to target these young people so that they were more supported and could provide an alternative to hanging around on the streets.

Preston United get the youths that they work with to sign a Behaviour Contract, the children are offered incentives and participate in a wide range of different diversionary activities. After each activity the group runs an informative workshop that they must attend as part of the Contract. There must also be parental or guardian input. The scheme is starting to work and they are starting to see changes.

Proportionally Chorley has just the same issues as Preston, it is arguable that the impact is greater as the town is smaller. Recent sad events in the Muslim Community have highlighted the immediate need for a male Asian youth worker in the Youth Service that could work within a mixed team to help address some of the issues in the Chorley area and provide a strong role model for young people.

The Preston United Group would be willing to help shadow and support the work of a similar group in Chorley and there may be other funding available from various sources.

The task group thanked Mr Khan for a highly informative and thought provoking presentation.

RESOLVED – That this emphasised the need for an alcohol related project to be a key focus for the Local Strategic Partnership, ideally on a project providing intensive intervention which will achieve high impact.

09.12 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Group received the recommendations to date of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Local Strategic Partnership as follows:

Objective 1

Ensure the wider engagement of the Council. Local Councillors and local people in the work of the Local Strategic Partnership.

- Received information on the current approach to information sharing regarding the work of the Chorley Partnership

Recommendations:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Friday, 27 February 2009

1. Future information regarding LSP activity will be included in the Members e.bulletin 'intheknow'
2. That links be provided in the 'intheknow' to the 'Ambition' County newsletter and the Chorley Partnership website
3. Encourage the thematic groups to publish their agenda and minutes within 3 working days of their meetings to promote a consistent approach.

Objective 2

Maximising capacity

- Received information on monitoring key success criteria and 'added value' for LSP projects looking at:
 - Funding sources
 - The framework currently used with partners to identify key success criteria
 - Including an interview with Alan Jones, Chair of Chorley Partnership

Recommendations:

1. To suggest that the Chorley Partnership concentrate on fewer larger projects, covering more than one of the thematic groups to achieve a greater impact in key initiatives. Less money available means fewer but better results – the view of Allan Jones
2. In order to increase the spend available, there is a need to attract money from other funding sources and also look to how other funding sources outside the LSP eg money paid out by Lancashire Locals, could be better co-ordinated to maximise impact.

Objective 3

Investigate how the LSP will tackle one of the issues for the Borough, the high rate of alcohol harm related hospital admission rates and the impact on anti-social behaviour.

- Received statistical information on Alcohol related harm in Chorley

Recommendations:

1. That one of the Chorley Partnerships projects be to improve Chorley's Alcohol harm related statistics.
2. That if Chorley Partnership decided to invest in a project relating to reducing Chorley Alcohol harm related statistics, they be invited to come and talk to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee about its work.

09.13 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions from members of the public.

Chair