

Consultation Paper – Proposed changes to the Worcestershire Partnership

Date 24th June 2010

Introduction

There is general agreement from those involved in the Worcestershire Partnership, that the current structures are no longer fit for purpose. Present arrangements worked well for several years, but as the Partnership has tried to adapt to changing demands, expectations and circumstances, it has become overly bureaucratic and costly to run both in terms of finances and the time commitments required from Support Officers and partners alike. The recent Deloitte review clearly illustrated the problems, but was unable to propose suitable solution. Since this review was published, circumstances continue to change, future constraints on public finances are already having an impact on the Partnership and its constituent organisations, and there is now an imperative to streamline arrangements and improve delivery.

Worcestershire Leaders board (Leaders of the seven Councils in the County, supported by their Chief Executive) has proposed a way forward which is supported by the Management Steering Group of Worcestershire Partnership. The proposals are set out below, for consultation across the Partnership.

Principles Underpinning the Proposals

- a. The need to streamline arrangements in the Partnership, to be more cost effective and time efficient,
- b. The need to sharpen the focus of the Partnership on delivering improvements, and greater clarity of the functions and membership of the different parts of the Partnership structures
- c. In particular the need to rebalance the function of the Board and the Assembly. A draft structure chart is attached to illustrate the proposals set out in this paper.
- d. Enabling Worcestershire to look outside county boundaries, as well as within the County, and to engage in the sub-regional agenda
- e. Partnership structures should be "good enough", but we should recognise that there is no neat and tidy structural solution which meets all needs and ties up all loose ends.
- f. To ensure a balance of inclusivity, but managing the size of meetings/Boards to ensure they are effective.

Question:

Are these the right principles?

Are there other issues which partners would wish to see changed?

Proposals:

1. Worcestershire Forum

Although the current Worcestershire Partnership Board is made up of around 40 member organisations, its membership excludes a wide range of organisations and communities that have an interest in the county. In order to communicate with a wider range of partners, the Partnership currently convenes an 'assembly', an annual one-day event that tends to be topic based and attended by a range of stakeholders, many of whom are already engaged at various levels across the Partnership. However, attendees are not considered to be 'members' of the assembly and some only come in contact with the Partnership once a year at this event, with attendance varying each year.

It is proposed that a newly formed Worcestershire Forum could be a fully inclusive network for all parts of the Partnership structures.

Purpose:

To inform, involve and consult a wider network about the strategic direction and priorities of the Partnership, as well as the effectiveness of delivery.

Membership:

Membership would be open to all, including representatives of voluntary and community groups, geographical communities and communities of interest. This would streamline the many existing consultative networks currently used at each level of the Partnership whilst enabling the widest possible range of stakeholders to engage with the Partnership.

Within new Terms of Reference for membership of the Partnership Board we need to take the opportunity to reinforce the feedback mechanism to be undertaken by these representatives

How it would work:

Rather than a single day event each year, this might be better coordinated through a twice yearly half day Forum meeting, at which all members of the Forum can be brought up to date on progress and debate key issues and significant change. Throughout the year, the Partnership's existing communication channels could be utilised to maintain a virtual Forum, established for streamlined and effective consultation shared across the Partnership structure.

Questions:

- a. Comments are invited about the process by which the Chair of the Forum might be selected.
- b. Is the regularity and length of meeting proposed suitable?
- c. Do partners feel this will facilitate wider involvement in the partnership, whilst minimising bureaucracy.
- d. What feedback mechanisms to aid partnership communication should be introduced and reinforced?

2. Partnership Board

Two major problems have been identified with the current working of the Partnership Board:

- Because there is no other effective way for many organisations to be involved, membership of the Board is seen as important. Membership has been inclusive, resulting in a Board involving over 40 organisations, some sending more than one representative. Consequently, Board meetings are too big and unfocused to be effective. Paradoxically, because of the lack of focus and effectiveness, many partners do not attend, or send very junior representatives who are unable to speak for their organisations.
- There is confusion between the roles of the Board and the Management Group, and considerable duplication in membership between the two.

It is proposed that the role of the Board is redefined, and membership significantly slimmed down.

Purpose:

- To set the strategic direction and vision of the Partnership
- To agree and own the Sustainable Community Strategy as the overarching vision and priorities for the County
- To agree priorities for action, e.g. LAA or its successors

Membership:

- Leaders of the seven local authorities
- Non-executive members (expected to be the Chair or Vice Chair) of other public sector bodies, to include as a minimum NHS Worcestershire, Police and Fire Authorities
- A senior voluntary sector representative
- A senior business representative

It is recognised that this will exclude many organisations currently having Board membership. However, by establishing the more inclusive and structured Forum (outlined above), together with the continuation of the Shenstone Group (see Section 7, page 6), the planned reconfiguration of Theme Groups (see Section 5) and further work on the role and function of District LSPs, (see Section 6) the Partnership will be able to provide a greater opportunity for wider representation of groups and more effective engagement within our structures.

How it would work:

- Quarterly meetings
- To be chaired by a Board member
- Supported by the chairs of the Public Services Executive Group (see proposal 3 below) and the Performance Group (see proposal 4 below)

Questions:

- a. Is the proposed membership right?
- b. What feedback mechanisms to aid partnership communication should be introduced and reinforced?

3. Public Services Executive Group (PEG)

The newly formed Public Services Executive Group was set up independent of the Worcestershire Partnership.

However, it is now proposed to bring it within this new streamlined structure.

Purpose:

- Co-ordinating discussions and decisions relating to public sector budgets
- Leading the delivery of Total Place workstreams (or any successor programme decided by the new government)
- Managing any "single budget" for Worcestershire which may be proposed by the Government
- Implementation of the Terms of Engagement Protocol

Membership:

- Chief Executives (or equivalent) from
 - NHS Worcestershire
 - H&W Fire & Rescue Service
 - West Mercia Police
 - County Council
 - 2 District Council representatives (currently Malvern Hills and Bromsgrove/Redditch)

How it would work:

Primarily concerned with public sector resources, it's very senior management membership will agree and champion joint working across public services. It will be supported by existing cross public sector arrangements e.g. treasurers groups, and by the WP Performance Group (see proposal 4 below).

4. Performance Group

In redefining the role and membership of the Partnership Board and the proposed Public Services Executive Group, the Worcestershire Leaders' Board proposes that the current Management Group could be disbanded. Much of its work, especially around performance and monitoring delivery of strategies could then be overseen by a strengthened Performance Group.

Purpose:

- overseeing the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy by appropriate delivery groups
- the monitoring, management and reporting (to the Board) of performance against the short to mid-term delivery of SCS priorities, currently being delivered through the Local Area Agreement, or through any future performance and delivery regime
- coordinating future reviews of, or changes to, the Sustainable Community Strategy and its associated implementation plans (currently the LAA).

Membership:

- Theme Group Chairs (subject to the outcome of any review – see below)
- Senior officers (Director/Head of Service) from public sector partners (to be agreed)
- Senior voluntary sector representatives – as appropriate
- Senior business representatives – as appropriate
- Relevant regional representatives

How it would work:

One of the strengths of the current structure is the relationship of the theme group chairs with the wider governance structures, ensuring that thematic knowledge and expertise can inform the decisions made by the Partnership Board. The inclusion of theme groups chairs in this group will necessitate a review of current positions, to ensure that the membership of the Performance Group is at the appropriate level. They would be part of the Theme Group Review (see below).

The Performance Group would report to the Partnership Board but would have functional reporting links to the Public Services Executive Group to ensure alignment with the delivery of Total Place and any public sector discussions by this group. As the performance and delivery processes such as CAA and LAA change it is hoped the burden of reporting and monitoring can be reduced to the minimum necessary to ensure we are tracking our own priorities and measuring outcomes.

Questions:

Are there opportunities to streamline structures further which partners can identify?

5. Theme Groups:

Following the implementation of the proposals outlined in this paper, there will be a review of the Partnership's delivery structures as a second phase, in order to ensure that they are more streamlined and cost-effective. In particular, a review will address:

- the terms of reference and membership of groups to ensure that duplication of purpose and attendance is reduced to the minimum appropriate
- arrangements that might streamline the current theme group structure, e.g. through merging or redefining groups
- the need for a common approach to be taken to the provision of infrastructure in the county through the Worcestershire Partnership, ensuring alignment with the priorities set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and with the coordination of spending decisions by the Public Services Executive Group and enabling Worcestershire to lead the delivery of infrastructure in response to the current sub-regional agenda

6. District LSPs:

Worcestershire Partnership has already agreed with the six District LSP's that there will in future be a single Sustainable Community Strategy for the county, with a chapter for each District (in place of six separate District LSP Sustainable Community Strategies). These chapters will include local targets derived from countywide objectives, and local action plans for their delivery, together with local (District) priorities and action plans. The LSP;s will therefore become a major delivery vehicle for the Sustainable Community Strategy. This offers the opportunity to streamline, share and standardise arrangements as appropriate, to reduce the current very large number of local Theme Groups which often duplicate membership and effort. How to realise this opportunity will be part of a second phase of work, to run in parallel with the review of Theme Groups.

7. Shenstone Group:

It is proposed to run the Shenstone Group for a further year, as a forum for Worcestershire's senior leaders and influencers, accountable to the Worcestershire Partnership Board. Work is currently underway on detailed proposals for membership, format, function and frequency, and these will be brought to the Worcestershire Partnership Board in July 2010. However, these proposals will include a wider membership, especially from business, third sector and civil society; a reduced frequency of events, and continuation of the Shenstone roles of "think tank" and champion for change, with no executive authority.

8. Timetable for Implementation:

- Paper circulated to all partners, and assembly attendees (week commencing 5th July) for comment
- Worcestershire Partnership Board 21st July 2010 for comment
- Management Steering Group – 8th September – review consultation feedback and proposals for implementation date
- Worcestershire Partnership Board 6th October 2010 final decision prior to Worcestershire Assembly on 11th November 2010 which could be in new Worcestershire Forum Format

All of these proposals, and in particular the proposals relating to the Worcestershire Forum and the Partnership Board will have implications for the wider membership of the Worcestershire Partnership. The implementation time-table above takes account of the need to undertake a consultation process which meets the undertaking in the 'Compact' with the voluntary sector.