

**Minutes from the Be Birmingham Programme Board
12th December 2007**

Present: Jon Bright (BCC, chair); (BCC); Elaine Elkington (BCC); (WMP); Ian Smith (for Philippa Holland (GOWM)); Brian Carr (BVSC); Les Lawrence (BCC); and Jerry Blackett (Chamber of Commerce).

Supporting officers, observers and guests: Dr Naomi Rees (BSP, Partnership Manager, notes); Jayne Bench (BSP); Richard Kenny (BSP); and Jackie Mould (BSP Director).

Item 1, 2, 3 and 4: Apologies, declarations of interest, notes and matter arising

Member apologies were received from Brian Carr, Sophia Christie, Paul Scarrott David Cragg, Paul Tilsley, Anil Patani, Joy Warmington and Stephen Hughes. Ian Smith was welcomed to his first meeting. He would replace Andrea Whitworth, who stands in for Philippa Holland from time to time, after Christmas.

The notes were agreed as accurate and there were no matters arising on declared conflicts of interest.

Item 4 : Update from the Director

Jackie Mould told the group that the Community Strategy was now out for consultation, the 1st draft of the LAA was with GOWM and the stocktake group was meeting the following day. She had had a meeting with Mirza Ahmad (Chief Legal officer), following the BeBirmingham board meeting, to discuss issues around the decision making process. The meeting had gone well and she was going to prepare a paper to share firstly with Mirza and then the PB, clarifying the position. Lastly she mentioned that some briefing material was available on the working neighbourhoods fund and while there was clarity about the amount allocated to Birmingham, the criteria and exact process was not clear.

A number of points were raised;

- Les Lawrence thought the working neighbourhoods fund offered an exciting freedom to innovate and mentioned the opportunity, for example, to create social enterprise/community interest companies to address childcare shortfalls, thereby linking the economic drivers with community needs.
- Richard asked GOWM to be clear what was, and what was not, covered by the Birmingham allocation, specifically how the originally total allocation appeared to have been reduced from £2 billion to £1.5 billion.
- Elaine highlighted the importance to the constituencies and the pathfinder in the Northwest.

The group recognised a list of inter-related activities that would contribute to how the funding is used;

- Discussions on accountability and decision-making
- LAA priorities and the associated LAA delivery thematic workshops
- Developing work on the neighbourhood program and social enterprise

- Evidence-based analysis carried out by 'Block 4' on the Enterprise Plan and related partnership/BCC work underpinning the action plan on worklessness
- Key lessons coming out of the NRF evaluation

Action : Jackie Mould to schedule a further discussion on the working neighbourhoods fund at the next PB meeting.

Item 6: Report back on NRF evaluation

Carol Hayden, Shared Intelligence, had been retained to conduct an evaluation of the NRF programme. She briefly described the main findings and recommendations. The slides are attached so not repeated here. The draft report would be produced after the session and would contain more information and several supporting case studies.

Carol made several key observations;

- There was a wealth of information available to the evaluation team and although there was a great deal of variation across wards and themes it was possible to extract key findings and suggest priorities issues
- The way NRF had been used for each topic was very different; for community safety issues the fund largely supported existing police activities, whereas the children and young people block funded non-statutory activity. In other areas the fund offered new ways of gathering information and developing partnership approaches to problem solving.
- The application of evidence-base differed from targeted/evaluated programs to the more loosely designed responses to local priorities
- The Floor Target Action Planning process had been recognised as an important development particularly where it motivated a change in emphasis and service delivery mechanisms
- It was not always easy to see the link between the work carried out and the associated floor target but it was clear a number of community engagement, service redesign, community cohesion and community leadership opportunities had been explored and achieved
- Links between city strategy and the good practice and knowledge at the community/neighbourhood level was still a challenge. While the projects at the wards appeared unstrategic the position had improved in the last 2 years and there are several encouraging case studies in the draft report
- There still remain a number of barriers; the availability and use of information at the ward level, the length of time, and capacity issues, in running a commissioning process and a general lack of adequate project/performance skills/resources.
- The Birmingham NRF program has lead to a number of very positive developments; a clear strategic steer at the city level, improved and strengthen partnership ways of working, increased emphasis on different issues such as inequalities and community cohesion and in-depth analysis of critical issues for health, housing and worklessness.

Carol suggested that the partnership should; build on the progress; strengthen the strategic co-ordination of the BeBirmingham team; better use evidence to set priorities; support effective commissioning; link projects to LAA outcomes; ensure project officers receive the time/skills to manage performance, linked to a central system; clarify different roles/responsibilities; and link constituencies, wards and neighbourhoods to the city-wide partnership.

Several PB members thanked Carol for her insightful and useful analysis. The group agreed that the evaluation should be shared more widely. The group also reflected that the findings should inform the current exit strategy.

Action : Jackie Mould to ensure that the draft report/findings are circulated appropriately and that the findings support exit strategy discussions.

Item 7: Community engagement

Brian Carr declared an interest as at least one interim project was being carried out by BVSC.

Jackie Mould spoke to the paper on community engagement. In summary she said that the vast majority of the work done to date had been about managing the transition of funding and as a result the new arrangement was not as developed as hoped. It was clearer that the community engagement work should be linked to the neighbourhood program and how it would be staffed was being considered as part of the exit strategy in the constituencies. The taskgroup had met once and a wider workshop had met once. A number of short-term projects would be commissioned from the remainder of the community engagement fund and issues around long-term governance would feature in the stocktake. She felt this outcome approach shows collective leadership and sends a strong statement about 'growing the market' and building a bank of good practice. The list of recommended projects would be reviewed by the taskgroup and built into the LAA.

Brian observed that the projects were not separate activities but very much plugged into work that already exists.

Action: Jackie Mould to proceed and keep the PB informed of progress

Item 8: Birmingham local compact – self assessment review

Brian Carr spoke to a paper. A review of the Birmingham to place in Oct 2007 and while there were a number of positive examples, and recognised awards, the application of compact principles across the BeBirmingham partners is not consistent. The self assessment recommended that the compact be refreshed and take the opportunity to incorporate the national codes of practice in one document. The Compact Implementation Action Group should be formally recognised as a sub-group of the BSP and have a role in establishing an action plan for each partner agency and performance management. The self-assessment also highlighted a concern about consistency across central government and an underlying conflict between the compact principles and a variety of audit/financial systems. There was a danger that the sector would lose faith in the compact if it did not actively show how it was removing historical barriers. Elaine observed the important link between the community engagement/empowerment aspirations and the compact.

Action : Jackie Mould and Brian Carr to lead discussions with partners to determine a way forward.

Item 9: LAA six month report

Richard Kenny asked that the group endorse the LAA six-month LAA so that it could be sent to GOWM. Jon Bright informed the group that Jason Lowther and Richard Kenny would be using the information to update BCC CMT and the BeBirmingham Executive respectively so a co-ordinated work program could be developed.

The group endorsed the report.

Action : Richard Kenny to send the six-month review to GOWM on behalf of BeBirmingham.

Item 10: Financial profiles

Jayne Bench briefly reviewed the financial profile. 100% had been allocated and the spend was in the region of 30-35%. This was a better picture than previous years but the implementation of voyager was making it difficult to be any more confident. There were 3 constituencies with current (and historical) pattern of under spends and lfor Jones would be meeting with them before Christmas. Jayne reported that she now had a contact point for each of the partner agencies and was reasonable happy with progress.

Action : Jayne to keep the PB informed.

Item 11: AOB

On behalf of the PB Jerry Blackett thanked Jon Bright for his leadership and participation.

Next meeting

Thursday 17th January 2008, 09:00 – 10:30am, Council House, VIP room.