

Minutes from the Birmingham Strategic Partnership Programme Board 10th October 2007

Present: Jon Bright (BCC); Sophia Christie (PCT); CSupt Paul Scarrott (WMP) Joy Warmington (BRAP); Paul Tilsley (BCC); Elaine Elkington (BCC); David Cragg (LSC, Chair); Anil Patani (WMP); Philippa Holland (GOWM) and Jerry Blackett (Chamber of Commerce).

Supporting officers, observers and guests: Dr Naomi Rees (BSP Partnership Manager, notes); Ken Lawrence (BSP); Jayne Bench (BSP); Ann Parker Moule (BCC); John Cade (BCC); Emma Williamson (BCC); Andrea Whitworth (GOWM) and Jackie Mould (BSP Director).

Item 1, 2 and 3: Apologies, minutes and action points

Member apologies were received from Brian Carr, Les Lawrence/Tony Howell and Stephen Hughes. The notes were agreed as accurate.

The group took the opportunity to update each other on the community engagement developments. A number of points were made;

- Work was proceeding on implementing the recommendations made at the July PB meeting and accepted at BSP board meeting in September 2007. The Community engagement taskgroup, chaired by Joy Warmington, would meet next week for the first time and further develop the high level outcomes, draft a commissioning framework and a consultation process.
- A number of PB members that had been in contact with Neighbourhood Forums (NF) said that once the NF was aware of the position they were content. The group felt that some of the BSP intent had been lost in translation. A position statement was being prepared for the BSP board to avoid any confusion. The chair noted that he had also met with Mick Rice.
- Legal advice had been sought throughout the process and Jackie told the group that TUPE was unlikely to apply in this case. The PB agreed that while each person affected had already been sent a letter explaining the situation, and there had been some take-up of the offered assistance in finding new jobs, this offer of assistance should be followed up in person.
- Bids from Neighbourhood Forums were still being processed and it was likely they would develop as voluntary organisations.

Philippa Holland updated the group on the CSR funding developments. Although the position was not entirely clear there was a renewed focus on disadvantaged people and deprived areas with a particular focus on the economic/enterprise development, skills and employment. The funds will be allocated through LSPs and be based on the new index of deprivation available in Dec 2007. The PB members raised concerns about the 'vagueness' about what the proposed £2 billion would cover and the timescale for the allocation decision. Philippa offered to keep Jackie Mould and Jon Bright informed between meetings.

Action : Jackie Mould to circulate a briefing note on community engagement to the BSP board and set out the timetable for the new service at the next PB meeting.

Item 4: BSP stocktake

a) Stocktake interim report

Jackie Mould updated the group on the stocktake. 2 NRAs had been commissioned and would meet with BSP members over the next few weeks. 2 taskgroup meetings (members are Jerry Blackett, Elaine Elkington, Sophia Christie, Anil Patani and Jackie Mould) were scheduled in Nov and Dec. The recommendations would come to the PB in December with the final report in January 2008. The BSP structure and function would be designed as a best-fit for delivering the LAA.

Jackie listed a few initial thoughts;

- Need to refresh the BSP membership
- BSP board meeting three or four times a year to set strategy and direction of travel
- Public Service Board to oversee performance and delivery of LAA
- C&YP Partnership and Health & Wellbeing Partnership continue – improve reporting, accountability and communication arrangements
- Safer Stronger Board – streamline and tidy up
- Re-examine role and position of both the Housing Partnership and Environment Partnership
- Develop a strong economic partnership with higher profile and improved with partners including BCC and private sector businesses
- Neighbourhood Board to oversee neighbourhood programme and ‘closing the gap’. This could also include housing related issues, thus providing a clear place shaping focus.

A number of points were made;

- The two-way link between the BSP and Constituencies was being developed. The regional/sub-regional agendas would also need to be factored in.
- The role/function of the community cohesion forum should also be considered in the stocktake.
- The ‘Public Service Board’ terminology needed further definition/refinement so it was clear how it would add value across services (rather than be just about public service providers) and should show how it would include the contribution by voluntary or private sectors. The Health Partnership arrangement was recommended as a good model of working.
- Safety was a critical component to place-making and hard to separate out from the neighbourhood emphasis driving all the partners work. Any ‘tidying’ up of the SSC block needed to ensure this cross cutting principle remained as a central consideration.
- Paul Tilsley reflected that BSP members needed to have a strong commitment/mandate to make changes ‘back at the ranch’. He felt that engagement at the constituency level, utilising new opportunities for asset transfer, would improve delivery.
- The chair asked that further work should be done on developing a shared understanding of how the duty-to-cooperate translates into mutual accountability and new improved ways of working. This is particularly important when establishing how the strategic decisions of big delivery organisations play out at the neighbourhood level versus which organisation needs to be present or visible at the neighbourhood level. Joy Warrington

pointed out that it is not yet clear how the third sector signs up to this duty/commitment to contribute to public service.

- In determining the 'added public value' the stocktake needs to consider the key critical tension between the strategic/executive actions at a city/organisational level and the influence/engagement delivery at the front-line/neighbourhood level. Sophia Christie felt the 'polarity' map (showing how systems/situations can have opposite characteristics/qualities/ideas or principles at different points) is less about structures and more about aligning processes with a shared understanding of how the whole system works.

Sophia Christie described a recent NHS event on designing a system which will deliver world class commissioning. She felt this event symbolised a shift in interest and understanding about how to invest in health improvement and inequalities, the necessary interface between PCTs and local authorities when dealing with the determinants of health and the much greater relationship manager role with partners (look out not up). The 5 elements of world class commissioning were; strategic leadership, strategic planning, accountability, delivery and performance and procurement. Sophia felt that Birmingham was well placed to respond to these challenges.

Jackie Mould told the group that the entire support team, across the family of partnerships amounted to about 100 people and a cost of approximately £3.7 million. Discussions were underway with partners about how structures could be streamlined in the future. Caret and HR specialists were considering what roles and responsibilities would be required of the BSP support team. The PB was asked to agree an in principle indicative budget of £1.2 million as a working budget.

The group agreed that this seemed reasonable on condition that this would be influenced/shaped by further information as it became available on the LAA budget and criteria, did not signal ring-fencing of any job or made assumptions about partner contributions. The group recognised that while the CSR settlement and the LAA might allow more flexibility the actual amount would not be clear until December.

Action : Jackie Mould to feed comments into the BSP stock take and proceed with scoping the structure and costings of the BSP support team.

b) NRF Evaluation

Carol Hayden, Shared Intelligence, had been retained to conduct an evaluation of the NRF programme. She briefly described the process. These are outlined in a presentation and not repeated here. The evaluation was about looking back at the direct and indirect impact of NRF but also, by exploring the process, to inform future work. A high-level analysis of projects, interviews and 6 case studies would be carried out and a draft report produced by the end of November.

At this early stage of the evaluation the group made three general comments;

- The importance of understanding how/why NRF appears to have made an impact on some issues (clean/clean and safe) and not others (worklessness and health) and how this learning is fed into the CSR/LAA focus on working neighbourhoods.
- The need to explore the role/relationship of governance in impact delivery
- The way the findings will be communicated so that it positively signals further debate and wider understanding of what works.

c) Analysis of NRF funded posts and project exit strategies

Ken Lawrence told the group that there were about 1,000 live NRF projects; approximately 31 had confirmed that they would be mainstreamed, 619 were time-limited and coming to a natural end and a further 310 would be seeking funding after March 2008. There were 183 FTE and 113 sessional positions with an estimated 150 in the voluntary sector that were dependent on NRF funding. This was a preliminary position and further work would be needed to confirm staffing.

The PB thanked Ken for describing the scale of the challenge, while acknowledging that all the information was not yet in. The chair cautioned against assuming all the pieces of work were 'projects' as several, particularly in the thematic strands, were programmes of work. Sophia Christie said that 10 strands of health related work (amounting to £1.2 million) were likely to be mainstreamed. Joy Warmington asked whether mainstreaming was always good and Carol Hayden confirmed that the NRF evaluation would consider that question in some detail.

The group agreed that to adequately support the communication strategy for the end of NRF the partners needed to know which projects were operational at the constituency/theme area. Ken promised to have the relevant lists to partners shortly. Jackie Mould also accepted Joy Warmington's assistance in the funders/project event planned for February 2008.

The chair asked that the BSP team also consider the compact compliance issues during this exit phase, particularly around providing sufficient notification and any incompatibility with the LAA processes.

Action : Ken Lawrence to ensure that PB members (and others as necessary) obtain a list of NRF projects that are closed (blocks and themes). Ken Lawrence to further refine the information on the NRF exit strategy.

Item 5: Spend profiles

Jayne Bench reviewed the spend profile at month 6. This is laid out in the paper so will not be repeated here. She made it clear that the spend profile only reflected the available information and a better estimate of the current situation could only be made if further information was forthcoming. Compliance with procedures was critical this last year of NRF. A concurrent BCC transformation process meant that a number of finance system were also likely to change, leading to an additional challenge this year. Ifor Jones and Jayne Bench had scheduled a number of meetings to check ward spend and she asked that the PB members made sure the thematic spend was processed.

The chair recommended that a nominated finance person from each theme be identified to develop a robust system. The ward spend should be reviewed outside the meeting and recommendations brought back to the PB. Paul Tilsley offered to identify the wards at the greatest risk of underspending and to have 'a little chat'. Anil Patani reminded the group that any spend should achieve the greatest outcome.

Action : Meetings outside the PB (with Jackie, Paul, David Jon, Jayne and Ifor) on ward spend should provide recommendations for a subsequent PB meeting.

Item 6: Community call for action

John Cade described a pilot piece of work on the Community Call for Action and asked the PB to agree in principle to participate. There are two pieces of legislation that seek to induce a Community Call for Action and the Birmingham/DCLG pilot, unlike the Kirklees one, will explore a model with scrutiny at the 'last resort'. This essentially strengthens the role of existing partnership and positively tests the partners' duty-to-cooperate. A small all-party group of elected members are leading some exploratory work which will be developed for full consultation.

The PB was supportive and had a number of comments;

- The room for abuse and wasting public time is huge so it is important to get the Community Call for Action right. Scrutiny had to be comfortable to say no if the matter had been adequately dealt with elsewhere and the Community Call for Action must not be seen as 'yet another route of compliant'.
- The Birmingham Neighbourhood Policing has been nationally awarded as excellent. The Birmingham approach of *ask them what they want, do what is required, feedback what action has been done*, was a clear advantage.
- While the gateway/filter principle was accepted there may be examples when the Community Call for Action would highlight differences between local and national issues/risks. For this reason the Chief Executive of the Police Authority should be asked to comment, and the pilot should be considered as 'exploratory'.
- This proposed new way of working is likely to challenge ward councillors in particular, so the pilot should also explore what member development might be required.
- It would be useful to run through a number of examples, particularly those that may involve partner agencies that are further removed from the statutory functions of the local authority.

Action: John Cade would reflect on the comments as the pilot develops and keep the PB informed throughout the process.

Item 7: Dates for future meetings

The PB forward plan was distributed for information. The proposed dates were withdrawn as further work was required. They would be re-issued at a later date.

Item 8: AOB

Paul Scarrott noted that Birmingham had been identified as one of 4 areas that are a national risk for guns and gangs and senior members of the West Midlands police are briefing the PM on what is being done in Birmingham to reduce this risk.

Next meeting

Wednesday 14th November 2007, 10:00 – 11:30am, Centenary Room, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Centenary Square