

Management Group Meeting

Friday 27th November 2009

9:30 am, Hereford Room, Plough Lane, Hereford

Minutes

Present

Councilor Roger Phillips – Leader of Herefordshire Council (Chair)
Chris Bull – Herefordshire Council/NHS Herefordshire
Lynda Wilcox – Herefordshire Association of Local Councils
Lucy Phillips – Fire and Rescue Service
Mark Turner – West Mercia Police
Richard Quallington – Voluntary Sector
Paul Baker – Safer Herefordshire
Mark July – Environment Partnership
Peter Brown – Stronger Communities
Natalia Silver – Economic Development Partnership
Chris Baird – Children's Trust
Susan Roberts – Government Office West Midlands
Stuart Downing - Government Office West Midlands

In attendance

Chris Bucknell – Herefordshire Partnership Support Team
Philippa Lydford – Herefordshire Partnership Support Team
Oliver Goode – Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership
Rob Garner – Environment Partnership

Apologies

Gabby Wright – West Mercia Police
Ian Edwards – Advantage West Midlands

1. Introduction and Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked people to introduce themselves. Apologies were noted. The Chair explained to the group that Julie Gethin will start on 4th January 2010 in the post of Head of Partnership Support and he thanked Chris Bucknell for her support of the Partnership groups in her acting up capacity. Chris Bucknell thanked all Partners for their support.

2. Minutes of last meeting (9th September)

Capital funding – Peter Brown wanted it noted that there had been a discussion about time pressures regarding the Grange Court project. The minutes didn't reflect this. Chris Bucknell told the group that Grange Court had been discussed as a specific issue at the sub-group meeting and that the Chairs of the Policy and Delivery groups had been made aware of the time pressures regarding this project. Natalia Silver updated the group as to the position regarding Grange Court which may now get match funding from another source.

Action: Notes regarding Grange Court to be added to the minutes.

With this addition the minutes were agreed for accuracy

3. Matters Arising

Comprehensive Area Assessment

The CAA reports will be published on the One Place website 9th December. Herefordshire has no red or green flags and is one of the few local authorities with no red flags. There will be an annual assessment – CAA should be seen as a process of continual improvement and over the coming year the self-assessment will be reviewed and updated. Chris Bucknell thanked the partners for their input into the process; the way agencies work together in Herefordshire had been seen as a significant strength by Mary-Ann Bruce (CAA Lead).

4. Performance Management

The mid-year Local Area Agreement performance was presented to the Management Group and it was noted of particular importance, as we move into the final year of the LAA, that performance is maximised. Achievement of the targets will prove we are making a difference to the people of Herefordshire. It was important to ensure that all indicators performed well to achieve a good average across all targets to maximise the reward grant.

The Policy and Delivery Groups were invited to talk about their red indicators and what was being done to improve performance. People around the table were encouraged to positively challenge and look at ways that groups could work together to achieve improvement.

Stronger Communities

NI155 (Affordable Housing) has been affected by the economic downturn but was not locked down so there was a chance to renegotiate at the Review and Refresh. The 08/09 target was exceeded so it was felt that the 09/10 target was achievable. Affordable housing in Herefordshire and Shropshire is a regional priority but it was noted that housing plans took a long time to realise and the market will take time to recover.

NI 156 (Households in Temporary Accommodation) affects individual lives and puts pressure on budgets. There is a robust approach to assessments and private sector leasing schemes and loans to those in debt. The red grading reflects continuing pressure in this area of work.

Hidden homelessness had been discussed at the Children's Trust session at the Herefordshire Partnership Autumn event. This may be an area where partners could work together, with specific links to Supporting People.

It was noted that the Stronger Communities Group now has an enhanced role in relation to equalities (since the reorganisation of the Equalities Partnership).

Safer Communities

There are no indicators rated as red.

NI19 (Re-offending by young people) was thought to be deteriorating, although the Youth Offending Service felt the overall situation was improving.

NI30 (Prolific and Priority Offenders) underperformed last year but as the cohort is so small this had been caused by 2 convictions.

NI40 (Drug Users in Effective Treatment) has been affected by the restructure of DASH but performance is now improving.

NI47 (Killed or Seriously Injured) is a continuing cause for concern, particularly with the onset of winter. There was discussion about how involved the Highways Agency was in the delivery of this indicator, particularly as the A49 was a significant contributor to the road safety figures.

Healthier Communities and Older People

There was no one present to represent the Health and Wellbeing Policy and Delivery Group. This area of work continues to be cause for concern with ongoing poor performance, some of which was due to lack of data. At the last Health and Wellbeing Group it was noted that the group did not feel ready to take on responsibility for delivery, monitoring and reporting of LAA indicators. Some action plans were still outstanding although it was noted that these must exist somewhere within the system.

Recent talks regarding the Children's Trust Be Healthy Group have been very positive and it was felt that there was a lot of good work going on, but the systems and processes required to report performance did not exist.

Mark Turner noted that the Health and Wellbeing Group have partnership funding and as such should be accountable to the Management Group and Board. The CX agreed that there needed to be clarity about who is accountable for specific indicators, which partnership and which individuals to call to account.

Richard Quallington specifically queried the barriers and challenges to achievement of NI 130 (Social Care Clients receiving Self Directed Support). It was felt the analysis column was a bit bland and more information was needed.

Policy and Performance were going to look again at JMT responsibility for indicators. When the LAA was set up all indicators were assigned to a Council Director but with a joint Management Team now in place this needed to be reassessed.

Action:

1. The Chair to write to Dr Ali to express his concern about the continuing lack of engagement by the Health and Wellbeing Group.
2. Chris Bucknell to work with Policy and Performance to identify leads for all indicators
3. Chris Bucknell to ask for more information on NI 130

Children and Young People

There are no indicators rated as red.

NI 117 (NEET) – this target has been helped by funding which was available from the ABG flexible pot. There has been a lot of very positive cross-partnership activity but this target has obviously been affected by the general state of the economy.

It was noted that the downturn can provide opportunities for green jobs and apprenticeships and partners should consider whether they could offer these opportunities.

Actions:

1. Lynda Wilcox to talk to Chris Baird about the Business Link Project
2. Chris Baird to provide a paper on the actions around positive activities for young people so that links and possible contributions can be made.
3. Partners to consider where they can take on apprentices and make links with the Training Provider network to progress this.

Economic Development and Enterprise

There are no indicators rated as red. All indicators are currently graded blue because the activity has been achieved. It was noted there is little in-year or proxy data so there may be some surprises. These targets are not locked down and can be re-negotiated at the Refresh.

NI 152 (Working Age People on Out of Work Benefits). The Children's Trust is working with the Lifelong Learning Team on the Future Jobs Fund which is aimed at those unemployed for

over 6 months. The Connections to Opportunities project is for older long term unemployed (over 12 months), encouraging them to take steps towards gaining employment.

NI 163 (Working age population qualified to at least level 2 or higher). There are close links with the Learning and Skills Council and Children's Trust.

NI 171 (New Business Registrations). Funding through the ABG has supported this work and there have been a lot of enquiries from businesses looking at opportunities to grow. It was noted there are many exporters based in Herefordshire, many of these have been helped by the exchange rate. The State of Herefordshire report does not show business losses but shows de-registrations and benefit claimants. There was a 100% increase last year, but this is coming steadily down.

Environment

There are no indicators rated as red.

There was a need to establish which Policy and Delivery Group had responsibility for the two road maintenance indicators (NI 168 and NI 169). In the LAA these are shown under Safer Communities but in the Performance Report are listed under the Environment Partnership. There had also been discussions that these should sit with the Economic Development Partnership. This issue will be resolved once Policy and Performance have done their work on allocating indicators to lead Directors.

NI 186 (CO2 Reduction in the LA area). A paper was circulated and discussed. Herefordshire is ranked 10 out of 12 in the West Midlands. The Chair queried land use and Mark July replied that the output is a consequence of how land is used - this is being investigated further. Business is reducing proportionally slower than other areas. Domestic is going down faster. Rates are calculated on energy costs/ and/or the amount of fuel being sold in the various sectors. An increase in housing numbers will affect output but this would depend on how they were built; the Leominster Police Station was sited as an example of good practice in terms of reducing energy costs. Lucy Phillips noted that there were concerns around modern building construction and design and how quickly fires spread. The Chair noted that the way information was gathered and presented was important; reporting needed subtlety and consideration or it could lose credibility.

NI191(Residual Household Waste per Household) is performing well with the new recycling scheme now underway. It was noted this area needed further ABG money next year to achieve the three year target.

5. Allocation of Area Based Grant funding from 2010

The meeting of the Chief Executive and the Chairs of the Policy and Delivery Groups (3rd November) had agreed to guarantee 95% of historic grant funding with an adjustment for Economic Development and Environment, resulting in a guarantee of 94%. The notes of the ABG meeting and confirmation of the guarantee figures had been circulated to the Management Group. It was noted that these figures may change if the grants fluctuated.

GOWM confirmed they had no further update on whether ABG grants would be affected by the cuts in public sector funding.

It had been agreed that the flexible pot would be used to address specific priorities and that there would not be a bidding round for individual projects.

Which Policy and Delivery Groups would be involved in the distribution of Supporting People Grant still had to be decided. The Supporting People Commissioning Body was putting together a business case which would allow resources to be allocated to key areas. This would probably propose that funding would go through the Health and Wellbeing, Stronger Communities and Safer Communities Groups in some format. There would also be stronger links with the Children's Trust in the future.

Chris Bull noted that distribution of the Supporting People funding needed to be treated with care as the funding has been allocated for a specific purpose and activity should be maintained. The Audit Commission had reported that every £1 of Supporting People funding generated a £2 saving.

Julie Gethin, the new Head of Partnership Support had requested that no decisions be made on the process or allocation of ABG until she was in post as she wished to input into these discussions.

It was agreed that a decision must be made at the meeting in January 2010 otherwise delivery areas would not be able to link resources into their service planning.

It was agreed that the key commissioning criteria would be re-circulated with the addition of the following points

- Activity should show a clear investment in LAA priorities
- Activity should clearly be aimed at making a difference
- Investment should be linked to action and outcome
- There should be a strong business case with investment clearly translated into outcomes
- Funding and activity should clearly lead to improvement
- There should be a clear rationale for why support should come from ABG and not from other sources of funding
- Value needs to be added by groups working together
- There should be a requirement for groups to talk to other groups before submitting their proposal

Policy and Delivery Groups to be asked for views about what should be commissioned based on achieving the best outcomes. Allocations should be based on outcomes and not on achieving equity across Policy and Delivery Groups.

Action: Key commissioning criteria should be updated and sent out together with a timetable which would lead to a decision being made at the January Management Meeting.

6. Capital Funding

This would be informed by the results of the strategic prioritization and ABG allocation process. This would be discussed at the January meeting.

7. The CO2 Agenda – a cross cutting issue

Rob Garner gave a presentation to the Management Group. The Climate Change agenda was growing nationally and internationally with immense consequences for the community as a whole. He reminded the group that there was an existing Climate Change Strategy signed by the Herefordshire Partnership. There is an urgent need for local measures to be put in place and Rob urged partners to focus on an energy reduction action plan for their organization. He also stressed that partners should look wider than their organizations and engage the community and voluntary sector and the wider community. Businesses had a key part to play in this, along with schools, further education colleges and the land based sector.

By the end of March 2010 it was intended to have run pilots with at least three communities and engage individual businesses (through Community First). Lynda Wilcox noted that there was some concern over the pilots and requested that Parish Councils be used as the first point of contact in the community.

The Environment Policy and Delivery Group wanted to work with all other groups to achieve this target. All partners were encouraged to look at their own carbon reduction targets and to communicate these to the Environment Partnership.

Oliver Goode noted that other performance indicators have a carbon reduction element and all groups should share responsibility for carbon reduction. Policy and Delivery groups should nominate a representative who can work with Trish Marsh (Sustainability Manager) to ensure all activities reference carbon reduction in some form or other.

Rob Garner noted that additional funding was required from ABG if this target was to be progressed. The group felt that although carbon reduction was a major priority, investment should be considered in line with agreed processes.

Actions:

1. Partners to consider their carbon reduction plans and communicate these to the Partnership Support Team
2. Each Policy and Delivery Group to nominate a carbon reduction link and send names to the Partnership Support Team
3. Rob Garner to ensure that Community First contact Parish Councils regarding the pilots

8. Learning to Deliver Improvement Offer

Following a presentation to the HP Board in October, Annie Faulder, Deputy Chief Executive, had requested that the RIEP Improvement Project be based around the roll out of the Hearts of Herefordshire project. A pilot programme had been run in 4 localities and was designed to build the role of elected members as community leaders. Following discussions with WMP and other partners it was felt that although the HOH project had been very successful there was a need to look wider than this and take in all community engagement activities, ensuring they link together to inform the delivery of services.

Mark Turner noted that PACT was originally proposed by the police but had changed in nature to involve a wider range of partners. There is a need to make the various meetings and format work better, to build on the PACT and Hearts of Herefordshire brands and to look at how organizations engage with the community on long and short term issues.

Lynda Wilcox added that the Hearts of Herefordshire pilot had given some concern as the links with Parish Councils had not been there. Parish Councils have elected representatives, so initiatives need to work with and through them. It was felt that the Hearts of Herefordshire pilots had not done this as well as everyone would have wished.

The Chief Executive noted that there was a need to re-invigorate democracy and participation at a local level and to look carefully at how we work with different communities.

Several members mentioned that the various mechanisms for community engagement needed to be linked together in line with the emerging Community Engagement Strategy. Chris Bucknell noted that Julie Gethin would be progressing the Community Engagement Strategy and all comments to date would be incorporated.

Activities should be about empowerment and transparency and the results should lead to an improvement in service delivery.

Oliver Goode said that there was an expectation that the LSP would lead on the Improvement Project. The funding was designed to help achieve better fit between activities and the aims and objectives of the LSP and LAA. It should facilitate delivery of the community strategy and LAA outcomes, helping to put in place a mechanism to better understand local communities and their needs.

Annie Faulder had requested that Julie Gethin, the new Head of Partnership Support, lead on the development and delivery of the Improvement Project. The Chair asked if the Xmas deadline for submission of the project outline could be extended to allow Julie to develop the proposal. Oliver Goode felt that the Improvement Project should be progressed and should not be delayed until after Xmas. He added that the purpose of the Project Proposal Form was to put forward an outline to release funds; the detail of the activity could be developed at a later stage, particularly once the evaluation of the Hearts of Herefordshire project was available.

Action:

1. Chris Bucknell to liaise with Oliver Goode, Mark Turner, Chris Bull and Lynda Wilcox to take the Improvement Project forward.
2. Chris Bucknell to liaise with Julie Gethin regarding the project proposal

9. Any other business

Connecting Communities

Newton Farm and Golden Post had been put forward for funding under this government scheme. The scheme is designed to give support to local people to in order to give them the information, skills and support that they need to engage with the various opportunities available to them. Newton Farm and Golden Post was originally identified to go forward in Phase 3 (December/January) but following a meeting with Government Office colleagues the proposal was fast tracked through to Phase 2 (November 2009). Chris Bucknell paid tribute to Mandy Evans (South Wye Regeneration Manager), West Mercia Police and Herefordshire Housing Limited who had pulled the project together at very short notice. If successful it would bring around £50k and a range of other resources into the area. A decision is expected at the beginning of December.

Natalia Silver noted that without the Herefordshire Partnership structure this wouldn't have been possible.

Herefordshire Partnership Autumn Event

The event had been a success giving a chance for the wider partnership to input and challenge the three Policy and Delivery Groups that had been showcased (Economic Development, Children and Young People and Safer Herefordshire). The other three groups will be included at an event in the spring.

Local Development Framework

From the 18th January the Herefordshire Council will consult on the Local Development Framework. It is about infrastructure and community planning and the need to engage all communities and your organisations.

10. Date of next meeting

18th January 2010, 2pm in the Hereford Room, Plough Lane, Hereford