



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON PARTNERSHIP

AGENDA ITEM: 3

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON PARTNERSHIP HELD ON FRIDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2001 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.03 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.45 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr T J Fowler (in the Chair)

Mr M C Appleyard, Mrs P M Bacon, Mr D C T Graves, Mr C Jones, Mrs V Letheren, Mr W Lidgate, Mr D J Rowlands, Mrs C S Willetts.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Mr R Lingham-Wood.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Gerry Batchelor
Mr Roger Edwards
Ms Kate Kennally
Mr Jeffrey Orange
Mrs Claire Street

DECLARTIONS OF INTEREST

Mrs V Letheren declared a non-pecuniary interest due to her work within the Health Service.

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 July 2001, copies of which had been circulated, were confirmed.

2 PARTNERSHIPS WITH VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

The Chairman welcomed Members to the Committee, and introduced Kate Kennally and Jeffrey Orange who had come to talk to Members about

partnership and the voluntary sector from a social care perspective and who had circulated a report to Committee Members on this subject.

A presentation led by Kate Kennally followed (copies of the PowerPoint slides used are attached for information). Kate informed the Committee that she had only been in post for two months but that in that time she had been made aware of some partnerships that were working well and others that were not quite so effective. Kate emphasised that her presentation was based on her experience in her post so far, and was not a 'statement of fact'.

During the presentation the following points were made:

- Plenty of literature concerning partnerships was available. There had been a recent Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) report on voluntary organisations. Kings College in London had undertaken some research into what makes a successful partnership, and the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) were looking into how partnerships worked well.
- It was important to agree the key principles early on in a partnership, and to regard the partner as an equal.
- The relevance of individual consultation exercises should be clearly established.
- The funding of partnerships was often not coordinated. Voluntary organisations were adept at assessing possible sources of funding. Once primary funding had ceased, the Council was often requested to further fund partnerships. It would be beneficial if funding implications were addressed before the partnership began.
- Monitoring arrangements should be proportionate to the size of the partnership and should take into account how efficiently the partnership was working. Joint monitoring arrangements should also be considered.
- Having an identified contact person for liaison purposes could assist good working relationships in partnerships.
- It was possible to have just one service agreement in a partnership that involved a number of different agencies. The 'Connections' project was cited as an example of where this had worked well. Performance targets could be set for both partners.
- Work had taken place two years ago regarding 'local compacts' (designed to strengthen the relationship between local government and the voluntary sector) but this had not progressed further than the County and District Chief Executives Group (CADEX). Currently, the Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Group was pursuing the idea of local compacts.

A discussion followed where a number of questions were put to Kate and to Jeffrey Orange. A summary of the discussion follows:

- The difficulty of consolidating funding in long standing partnerships was acknowledged, although it should still be possible to consolidate monitoring arrangements. It was felt that consolidation of funding should not be as much of a problem when establishing new projects. Where projects were set up with a finite amount of money, regular monitoring and liaison meetings should take place to assess further opportunities/new initiatives for funding.
- Voluntary sector funding should rest with the appropriate Head of Service and should not be treated as a separate issue from ongoing work.
- Ways needed to be found of resourcing voluntary organisations to give them greater security. This would help to establish them as long-term service providers. It was acknowledged that the ethos and values of voluntary organisations might differ from statutory authorities.
- Other areas that had a two-tier system could be contacted to assess how they coordinated funding and how they involved Members in the partnership process. It was suggested that South Gloucestershire Council be contacted regarding this.
- Performance indicators should be chosen by both parties to assist with the monitoring of voluntary organisations as they might not have the necessary infrastructure or resources to cope with pre-determined requirements, as outlined in service agreements.
- Voluntary organisations were often able to provide services at less cost and could undertake fund raising to help resource projects.
- The burden of meeting statutory requirements could fall disproportionately on smaller rather than larger organisations. So, thought is required as to how small voluntary organisations can be supported in complying with statutory increases in standards and changes to standards required by the County Council (e.g. equalities, qualification to NVQ2).
- Consideration has to be given to developing the core infrastructure of organisations in order to enable them to undertake projects successfully.
- Consideration should be given to whether there are grounds for reviving the Independent and Voluntary Sector Panel. Also, whether there should be one body within the County Council responsible for all partnership funding.
- The Bucks Infrastructure Group (BIG) is involved with work around partnerships. The body comprises solely voluntary organisations at present. A question was raised over whether such a group should be developed further to include members.

The Chairman thanked Kate and Jeffrey for their valuable contribution to the meeting.

3 PARTNERSHIP REVIEW – THE WAY FORWARD

The Committee received a report from the Policy Support Officer which set out to provide guidance for the review of partnerships due to be undertaken between now and December, and which reflected the views of Members as discussed at the Committee's meeting in July.

A discussion ensued in which Members highlighted the need to involve other parties, including the District Councils, in the review of partnerships.

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to contact District Councils and the Health Authority to assess which areas of the voluntary sector they supported and why, and to establish a good working relationship with them under the 'partnership' umbrella. It was felt important to note that this was not a review of funding arrangements. The information received would then be fed back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4 NHS SCRUTINY: STOKE MANDEVILLE & SOUTH BUCKS HOSPITAL TRUST AMALGAMATION

Members were informed that the submission for the amalgamation was still being worked on and the timetable had yet to be finalised.

It was reported that Dorothea Reid from the Health Authority would be attending the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee to discuss how the scrutiny might proceed.

It was suggested that it might be useful to consult the Community Health Council regarding the amalgamation as they had also been looking at it.

5 NHS SCRUTINY – COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received a report from the Policy Support Officer, which set out some of the background to the scrutiny of the NHS in order to enable members to consider the terms of reference for the new Committee, and to address the size of the Committee.

It was agreed that a new Committee would need to be formed specifically for this purpose as the current Overview and Scrutiny Committee would not be able fit such a large issue into its work programme.

It was noted that if agreed, the recommendations would go first to Cabinet and then to full Council. The Chairman had contacted the District Councils for representatives who would be co-opted members on the new committee. To date only South Bucks DC had provided the name of their representative.

Resolved

That:

The terms of reference for the Committee as discussed in paragraphs 6 to 10 of the report be agreed.

The size of the new Committee in line with the recommendation in paragraphs 11 and 12 be agreed.

6 CABINET RESPONSE TO WINTER PRESSURES REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee Members confirmed that they were satisfied with the way in which the Chairman had dealt with the Cabinet response to the Winter Pressures Report Recommendations.

7 DATE OF FURTHER MEETINGS

It was agreed that an additional meeting be arranged on the 11 December 2001.

26 October 2001
30 November 2001
11 December 2001
25 January 2002
22 February 2002
22 March 2002 [to avoid Good Friday]
26 April 2002
31 May 2002
28 June 2002
26 July 2002
27 September 2002
25 October 2002
29 November 2002

All meetings to commence at 10.00am.

**MR T J FOWLER
CHAIRMAN**