

AGENDA ITEM 10**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****25TH JUNE, 2015.****LOCAL SERVICE BOARD DECISION ON AREA BASED PARTNERSHIP WORKING.****REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR CORPORATE AND FRONTLINE SERVICES****Author: Heledd Morgan, Partnership Manager, (01443) 680527****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1. This report provides context and an overview for Cabinet on the recent decisions taken by the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Service Board (LSB) to implement an area based approach to partnership working.
- 1.2. The report also sets out the initial geographical areas of focus and the rationale for this; actions taken to date and the proposed work programme going forward.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - 2.1.1. Note the model of partnership based working agreed by the LSB.
 - 2.1.2. As a key stakeholder in this work, champion this approach within Rhondda Cynon Taf .

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. As part of the ongoing review of partnership working across Rhondda Cynon Taf, the 2013/14 Single Integrated Plan Annual Review process identified that much of the delivery work to achieve the required outcomes was actually taking place outside of formal partnership board meetings. The review found that partnership working had evolved in a positive way, with officers now coming together to network, share information and explore joint opportunities together rather than through formal partnership boards.
- 3.2. Whilst the review identified opportunities for further streamlining, it was recognised that some formal partnership boards are a legislative requirement through Welsh Government or Central Government, and there are also many partnership boards / forums that exist with the purpose of making commissioning decisions. Although these partnership boards should also adhere to the principles of effective and efficient partnership working, they cannot be subject to the same level of flexibility as local partnership arrangements.

- 3.3. Upon evaluating the findings of the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) Annual Review 2013/14, a number of recommendations were made to the LSB by the Operational Steering Group (a group made up of senior partnership representatives), which resulted in an agreed new approach for partnership working. This resulted in the LSB, at their meeting in June 2014, agreeing the need to:
- narrow the focus to a smaller number of priorities which will have a greater impact;
 - target geographical areas to pilot the approach, focusing on those communities with the greatest need and greatest opportunities;
 - crucially, improve engagement with communities to help inform initiatives, using the new Joint Public Engagement Strategy as a guide;
 - improve the gathering and analysis of local intelligence and levels of data-sharing; and
 - reflect this in the way the Local Service Board, partnerships and scrutiny work.
- 3.4. Following work undertaken by the Operational Steering Group (OSG) during the Summer of 2014, the LSB agreed in September 2014 that, subject to transitional arrangements, the partnership boards of Safety, Health, Prosperity and Fframwaith were stood down. The LSB endorsed a more focussed way of working, using partnership resources to add value in a given geographical area. The members of the Board also agreed that the SIP priority of 'Education & Employability', or 'Skills and Jobs' as it is now known, should be the focus for this work.
- 3.5. In November 2014, the Chair of the LSB wrote to members of partnership organisations, outlining the decision, stating that:
- "The members of the LSB agreed to these proposals, but we stress that the operational mechanisms and relationships built up between partners cannot come to an end. However, we have recognised that partnership boards are no longer the most effective mechanism for this work to be planned, co-ordinated, delivered and evaluated..."*
- "The intention of these changes is not to break down the partnership arrangements that you have created but, rather, to provide a more innovative and far more focussed approach towards the key issue in Rhondda Cynon Taf of education and work. We have also agreed that work needs to be more targeted, looking at the areas most in need and working with the community to improve it."*
- 3.6. This way of working provides a new structure for partnership working in Rhondda Cynon Taf:
- The Local Service Board provides strategic direction, agreeing the allocation of resources, ensuring statutory duties are met and discussing solution for strategic exceptions encountered within partnership working.
 - The Operational Steering Group enables operational staff to work together across organisational boundaries, share information and collaborate with the community to create solutions. (Members of this group are also part of wider partnership arrangements, such as the Social Services & Wellbeing Act Partnership; the Area Planning Board; the Voluntary Sector Liaison

Committee etc. and therefore, provide strategic oversight to initiatives in the area.)

- The area based approach is not a formal partnership, but rather a way of working. This is targeted local work, using the assets and initiatives already existing in the area (sometimes referred to as 'asset based community development'). This will encompass the 'business as usual' partnership work that many officers already do. But it will also seek to co-ordinate and engage with area based organisations and forums such as Communities First, partners previously involved in the 'Canopi' framework, Flying Start, schools, community centres etc.

Through combining these efforts with community involvement and direction by the OSG / LSB, innovative actions will be encouraged to add value to the priority of 'Skills & Jobs'.

4. AREA BASED PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 4.1. There are a number of drivers for area based partnership working. As well as a desire locally to better co-ordinate opportunities by using partnership relationships more effectively, there is a national focus on developing local delivery arrangements for tackling partnership priorities.
- 4.2. Firstly, the *Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act* is concerned with putting the long term, intergenerational needs of an area at the centre of everything public bodies do i.e. the sustainable development principle, and emphasises working alongside communities, using an asset based approach, to improve wellbeing. When the Act comes into force, organisations will be audited on their ability to demonstrate this new way of working.
- 4.3. Secondly, both the *Environment (Wales) Bill* and the *Planning (Wales) Bill* include provisions to working within a specified geographical area to identify, plan, prioritise and deliver actions alongside the community.
- 4.4. The *Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act* also identifies community involvement, using the strengths that people can bring and connecting people to their communities as core principles.
- 4.5. The proposed work programme set out in section 5 of this report provides organisations with an opportunity to begin working in the ways required by the legislation, testing the governance principles set out for Public Service Boards (i.e. thinking long term, taking an integrated approach, taking a preventative approach, collaborating and involvement of community members).
- 4.6. The *Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People White Paper* consultation also contains references to neighbourhood participation and area management:

“engaging with local people to identify, prioritise and address local social, economic and environmental issues”, with “Area Boards...led by Councillors...that involve charities, community bodies, social enterprises and other public services, including Community Councils.”
- 4.7. Furthermore, there is growing national and local focus on community based service delivery and transfer of assets, with public services moving increasingly from a

provider to an enabler role. This is illustrated both by the recent launch of a National Assembly Working Group good practice guide to Community Asset Transfer in Rhondda Cynon Taf and by the volume of interest locally the Council has received with regards to the *RCT Together* campaign.

5. PROGRESS TO DATE

5.1. Three initial areas of targeted focus have been identified by members of the Operational Steering Group (OSG) and agreed by the LSB in March 2015. The initial areas for targeted area based partnership working are:

- **Rhondda Fach area (specifically Tylorstown, Maerdy and Ferndale).**
- **Pontypridd (including surrounding areas).**
- **Aberdare / Upper Cynon (specifically Aberdare, Penywaun and Hirwaun 2).**

(Please note: these are areas initially proposed for focus. As work progresses, it is anticipated that further area based partnership working will be established.)

5.2. The method for making this selection included OSG members and their colleagues in each partner organisation analysing a range of data relating to education, skills, crime, employment and health, to shortlist areas for targeted intervention.

5.3. OSG members also consulted within their organisations, looking at criteria, such as:

- where there is opportunity to leverage in funding.
- where there is already work being done / where a body of work can be built up.
- organisational priorities and key projects for the medium term.
- how the areas can contribute and relate to each other.
- external factors i.e. Welsh Govt, UK Govt, neighbouring LA initiatives and opportunities.
- Other organisations working in the area e.g. RSLs, charities.

5.4. Locally, it was felt by partners that targeting resources in a more efficient way at these geographical areas would maximise opportunities to link into wider funding initiatives, such as European Union funding; Vibrant and Viable places funding; partner capital investment; asset transfer; Environment Grant funding.

5.5. There are also opportunities to link into wider pieces of partnership working, such as the Welsh Government Cynefin programme; the Natural Resources Wales area based pilot and the ongoing community development through the third sector in each identified area.

5.6. A workshop for senior partnership representatives and Cabinet members was held on the 22nd April 2015, with the following objectives:

- Establish an understanding among strategic leads of this new approach to partnership working, so that operational work in the areas put forward can be supported and co-ordinated as appropriate.
- Provide an opportunity for strategic leads to feed into this new approach to partnership working.
- Explore how key stakeholders can get involved with this new approach.

to communicate the approach to area based partnership working and asset based community development.

The feedback from the workshop was extremely positive and most attendees were keen to be involved in further work.

- 5.7. Subsequently, on the 12th May 2015, this approach was shared at a Welsh Government event hosted by the Commissioner of Future Generations, seeking to explore the join up between the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Environment Bill and Planning Bill. The approach being taken in Rhondda Cynon Taf was strongly endorsed by Welsh Government colleagues as good preparation for this legislation.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

- 6.1. The next steps for this work include:
- i. Agreement of a methodology, common message and the plan for community engagement.
 - ii. Area based workshop events (to take place in July / August) with community members and operational staff, from across partner organisations, in each area to understand the assets and concerns of community members, linked to 'Skills & Jobs'. The outcome of these workshops will be an action plan for the area.
 - iii. Alongside this, work will be undertaken within services to understand the buildings, services, financial resources and funding / service opportunities in each area.
 - iv. Area based plan agreed for each area, to be reported to the LSB in September 2015 (not withstanding that some work will have already begun and connections will have been formed).
 - v. Evaluation model to be put in place to document this approach (a graduate officer will be working on this from Summer 2015.)
 - vi. The action plan will include the approach for each area. This is likely to be different for each area, but will include co-ordinating efforts more effectively and engaging with local partners to exploit opportunities for improving skills and job prospects.
 - vii. LSB will be required to direct resources and endorse programmes to take place and challenge progress/performance.
 - viii. Scrutiny will be undertaken by the LSB Scrutiny Working Group.
- 6.2. Co-ordination of activity will involve many partners, including (but not exclusive to):
- Members of the community;
 - Members of the business community;
 - Schools;
 - Communities First;
 - Flying Start;
 - Families First funded projects;
 - Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and Elected Members;
 - Registered Social Landlords;
 - Cwm Taf University Health Board;
 - Interlink RCT;
 - South Wales Police;
 - South Wales Fire & Rescue Service;
 - Natural Resources Wales;
 - Community and Town Councils.

- 6.3. To enable this approach to be successful and make a difference to the targeted communities, commitment is required from organisations of the LSB to direct resource and challenge activity (point vii).

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. Alongside upcoming legislation, a review of partnership working identified a need to focus work on a smaller number of priorities and target geographical areas, producing area based plans.
- 7.2. The LSB have agreed to three geographical areas to begin this work, using the knowledge and experience of partner organisations to work alongside the community in co-ordinating efforts and improve outcomes relating to 'Skills & Jobs'.
- 7.3. Cabinet are asked to note this model, and champion the approach across Rhondda Cynon Taf
