

Peer Challenge of Locality Self-Evaluation for CAA: Hambleton Strategic Partnership

Feedback given to the council and partners on 23-04-2009

The Local Context

- Hambleton District is one of the largest geographically, with a population of 86,500 people. The district is essentially rural with five market towns which are home to 42% of the population. Hambleton has an aging population and according to the 2001 census 24 % of residents are over 60 and 19% under 16. It is one of the least deprived areas nationally, but does have pockets of deprivation. It is also relatively safe and residents enjoy positive health.
- The Hambleton Strategic Partnership (HSP) brings together a wide range of partner organisations and groups covering the public, private and voluntary sectors. The HSP has a board and executive group and operates 5 themed groups (People, Places, Prosperous, Safe and Healthy) and 5 area groups covering Bedale, Easingwold, Northallerton, Stokesley and Thirsk. To compliment this the council has five area forums who are attended by local ward councillors within each of the areas.

The Peer Challenge

Hambleton Strategic Partnership is the first District to have undertaken a peer challenge of its locality self evaluation for Comprehensive Area Assessment.

The programme of peer challenge consisted of:

- Pre-reading of the locality self evaluation and supporting evidence
- Partner survey – A review of the feedback from 23 partners
- Peer challenge phase – 3 days onsite from the 21st to the 23rd April 2009 including a mix of individual interviews and group sessions
- A follow up session to assist the HSP with action planning, to provide challenge to proposed actions and identify what further support may be required

The Hambleton Strategic Partnership requested that the team look at overall partnership working and three theme areas of:

Health - Focus on improving health through increasing participation in sports and physical activity

Prosperous - Focus on business engagement

Places - Focus on affordable housing and homelessness

The team for the peer challenge consisted of:

- Jean Hunter – Chief Executive of South Ribble Borough Council
- Cllr Peter Britcliffe – Leader of Hyndburn Borough Council
- Paul Coates – Managing Director of Toynbee Housing Association
- Bryan Raine – Assistant Director of Policy, Community Planning and Regeneration of Essex County Council
- Gary Hughes – IDeA Review Manager
- Heather Ward – IDeA Improvement Manager

The team used the three key headings which map across to the CAA key questions for Area Assessment as the framework for the peer challenge and feedback is provided and will cover the following:

- Overall partnership working including Member engagement
- Understanding local need and translation into local priorities
- The delivery of improvements and outcomes in the area
 - Focus on the Health Theme
 - Focus on the Prosperous Theme
 - Focus on the Places Theme
- Gap analysis and planning for the future

OVERALL PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Opportunities

- The Leader and all councillors are supportive of partnership working – “If they are improving residents’ lives then we are pleased”
- Chair Designate of the HSP has strength, energy and vision and is looking forward to working with Councillors
- New individuals joining the partnership and new structures emerging to support this e.g. police, health. County input “moving in the right direction”.
- Refresh of LAA and new area/community plan next year will enable the collective shaping of a greater sense of purpose, ownership of priorities, and alignment across all partners and with sub regional and regional levels.
- Neighbourhood Profiles could provide an opportunity for the HSP, Councillors, Council Officers, Agencies and the Public to get together to discuss and agree the issues
- “Working Better Together” published by the Audit Commission contains key messages for all councillors but in particular for Overview and Scrutiny Committees and could be used as a framework for training

Overall strengths

- The Council is recognised by all as innovative, creative and excellent at partnership working, with a track record of delivering and maximising external funding as a result.
- Partnership working has worked well to date, with partners able to articulate positive examples of achievement, in particular via the area structures. It is recognised as one of the most progressive and innovative partnerships, with proactive partners focused on delivery.
- The council welcomes and supports partnership working at all levels, is open to challenge by partners and is a driving force but does not dominate the partnership. Significant roles played by a number of council and partner officers highlighted on numerous occasions, particularly partnership manager, development officer, community link officer
- The Chair is recognised by all partners and stakeholders for his contribution in getting the partnership to where it is now.

Overall areas for consideration

- Ensuring all partners are fully engaged at an appropriate level and held to account for delivery of prioritised actions.

- Developing a shared understanding among all partners of the key issues and outcomes required, including from the thematic and area groups, and how these will be identified and monitored through the new performance management framework.
- Raising the profile of the partnership, what it is achieving and how it can add value among all stakeholders including partners and councillors. Creating an active two-way dialogue between partnership and key partners including elected members.
- Reviewing cost, benefits and funding for partnership working to ensure all partners contribute appropriately both directly and in kind. Creating a pooled budget for the partnership to invest in a more creative approach to joined up initiatives which deliver different ways of working and better outcomes for local communities. Reviewing effectiveness of grant allocation by individual partners.
- Partnership structure (themes/areas) very established and works well but may be timely to refresh to ensure streamlined, focused, adding value and understood by all. In particular:-
 - alignment with big issues moving forward (LAA, Environment);
 - effective operation of thematic groups
 - clarity of roles and responsibilities at area level.

Understanding local needs and translation into local priorities

Overall strengths

- Community plan is widely owned, understood and recognised as developing a shared common purpose for the partnership.
- Area structures have enabled a bottom-up approach to community engagement.
- Local priorities/projects identified, prioritised, funded and delivered within area structure.
- Parish plans, where they exist, have worked well and enabled engagement with villages.

Overall areas for consideration

- More strategic, systematic and evidence-based approach to assessing and monitoring of needs at a borough, area and neighbourhood level (building on JSNA, Places Survey, Crime Intelligence, Neighbourhood Profiles).
- Earlier partnership discussions at a strategic level of big issues facing the borough and the implications for all partners eg of ageing population, of preparedness for upturn in economy.
- Ensuring that all partners act collectively as well as individually, positively sign up to priorities and plans at the highest possible level and shape mainstream funding to address partnership priorities.
- More effective connectivity between the strategic issues faced by the borough and how the partnership is driving partner activity to address these.
- Community engagement needs to be streamlined, rationalised and delivered in a more joined up and coherent way, with all partners signed up to acting on the outcomes and managing expectations in-line with their own principles

Delivery of improvements and outcomes in the area

Overall Strengths

- Partnership working is recognised by all as having a very practical focus and a strong track record of delivery.
- Widespread positive examples of physical regeneration. Council seen as a "can do" partner who makes things happen on the ground.
- Significant success in attracting external funding for all levels of activity.

Overall areas for consideration

- More focused and geographical targeting of multi-agency initiatives to address need and inequality.
- More attention to people/communities and behavioural issues in addition to physical regeneration e.g. learning, skills, healthy lifestyles etc.
- More systematic approach to setting targets and monitoring outcomes.

Health Theme – Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

Strengths

- Overall there is a really strong ethos of working in partnership to increase participation in sport and physical activity across Hambleton District Council and other partner organisations
- There is a high level of motivation and enthusiasm for partnership working across the sports and physical activity sector within Hambleton – Staff at all levels have a strong can do attitude and are solution focussed
- Excellent examples of delivering successful projects with high levels of participation and anecdotal evidence that they are making a difference to the people of Hambleton
- Strong and effective club and volunteer structure that is recognised as a key delivery partner and is successfully delivering services
- A good sports and physical activity infrastructure within Hambleton and work underway deliver services and projects to those hard to reach and living in rural locations
- The jointly funded Physical Activity Officer post is a positive approach to working in partnership.

Areas for consideration

- There was a lack of evidence in delivering improvements and outcomes for addressing health issues beyond the physical activity and sports remit

- Improve the measurement of outcomes - The sports and physical activity partners could further benefit from the development of a robust performance management framework that enables them to demonstrate the outcomes they are achieving.
- Communicate these benefits – This fits with the wider area for improvement of communicating the work of the LSP and the sports and physical activity partners could further improve wider partner understanding
- Operational staff and partners could better understand the wider impacts of sport and physical activity, particularly on the Health agenda, to enable them to better answer the 'so what?' question and better articulate the impact of services they are providing

Prosperous Theme - Focus on business engagement

Strengths

- 'Regional Bodies' are especially committed to working with HDC and the LSP because they are 'best in class' as far as North Yorkshire is concerned; resources are often matched and, the job gets done.
- In focus groups people referred to 'individuals' they can do business with and really didn't care whether they were talking to the LSP, an individual body or even which individual body
- A strong economic development and regeneration package of interventions is very visible. Other funding partners like working with HDC because the job gets done.
- The creation of a business forum is a positive move forward and such a body needs to understand where it fits into the LSP architecture and what is expected of it, laid out with a great degree of clarity. It needs to establish the needs of the business community and begin to deliver on the ground against some of those expressed needs

Areas for consideration

- A communications action plan needs to focus on getting the message out to the business community in a way that is understood.
 - Clarity of purpose of the LSP has to be expressed in simple terms
 - Successes due to the work of the partnership need to be heralded as such
 - Process should not be undervalued, it is clear that 'stuff' happens as an outcome of the valuable networking opportunity that the LSP generally, and the prosperous theme group specifically enables to happen
- Businesses need to understand 'what's in it for them'; that their voice will be heard; that outcomes will be achieved and, that achievements will be publicised and credited
- There is a need for ongoing engagement with the business community for example the recession is on the minds of business community colleagues, there is some hunger for debate, and indeed strategic leadership but it is not clear where that is coming from
- Improve creative thinking around mechanisms for business engagement, where to meet, when to meet, what kind of meeting e.g. a standard committee format, a 9-5 approach, might not always get the best out of business colleagues.

Places Theme – Focus on affordable housing and homelessness

Overall strengths

- Theme has a track record of delivery and can evidence many examples across the housing theme
 - Women's refuge in Northallerton – Demonstrates partnership working and Broadacres preparedness to take risk i.e. buy the site in advance of planning and funding.
- Local development framework was regarded as a strength and had provided clarity to the market, enabling partnership staff to negotiate with landowners on land deals and future opportunities
- The need for more affordable housing is acknowledged at all levels (County and District). Partnership members felt this need was supported by Councillors in Council meetings and in one to one discussions with constituents
- The roles of several HDC Officers are highly regarded and seen as a successful in leading on need and linking that to outcomes
- North Yorkshire Housing Strategy – Ready December 2009. HSP engaged in this process – Significant opportunity to influence

Areas for consideration

- A lot of good work is happening but is this because of the strength and commitment of the individual partners more than the role of the HSP? This is perhaps an opportunity to link the partners work into the HSP and promote the successes of the HSP and partners to a wider audience.
- One stop shops – There appears to be confusion about whether the One stop shop initiative will be rolled out across Hambleton. Stokesley has one, whilst other areas don't. Agreeing the approach would be useful
- Empty homes work is incredibly work intensive – The Places Theme should ask themselves whether the inputs justify the outcomes?

Gap analysis and planning for the future

Strengths

- Self assessment identifies key issues, challenges and improvements and is recognised and owned by partners.
- Good start with a draft programme which is owned by partners and which addresses key areas for improvement, including profile of partnership, clarity and communication, data sharing and analysis, performance management, outcomes focus and funding/future sustainability.
- Council and partners very self aware and keen to learn and improve.

Areas for consideration

- Self evaluation could tell a more coherent story in relation to the strategic issues facing the borough and how these are translated into action at the local level by all partners working together.
- Improvement plan to incorporate issues identified in this process, including how the big issues facing the borough will be addressed and how the effectiveness of thematic groups will be tackled.
- Equalities impact assessment of partnership membership, structures and outcomes to be carried out to identify actions for improvement.
- An integrated approach to workforce strategy to help sustain the values of the partnership.
- The HSP should consider the effectiveness of the Health Theme group and its contribution to addressing the wider health challenges beyond participation in sport and physical activity such as an aging population, teenage pregnancy, smoking cessation, obesity amongst children and young people and alcohol abuse
- Ensure clarity of purpose for the Prosperous Theme group to assist it in reaching out to local businesses on their terms. An action orientated approach is central to maintaining private sector interest and the LSP need to set actions within the Improvement Plan, monitor achievements, attribute them as appropriate and publicise success.
- The LSP should review the affordable homes delivery programme with particular emphasis placed on land supply. The challenge to deliver more affordable units in Hambleton is real, land prices are high and there is a scarcity of available land, particularly in rural communities. A joint asset strategy may help.