

Outcomes of the Review of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust as Key Partner Using the Partnership Evaluation Tool

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide Members with the report and recommendations of the review of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust as a key partner and details of a proposed way forward to strengthen the partnership.

2. Recommendations

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members:

- 2.1. **Note the outcomes and recommendations of the review of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust as attached in Appendix 1 (Page 19)**
- 2.2. **Agree to the development of an action plan that brings together all of the review recommendations, and that officer's work to implement them during 2006/7.**
- 2.3. **Agree that an update on the progress of implementing the review recommendations is brought to Executive in September 2006.**

3. Links to the Corporate Plan

- 3.1. The Councils priority of Partnerships highlights the development and delivery of community based projects arising from the community planning process that could support the delivery of other Council Priorities including Housing, Equalities and Diversity and Healthy Lifestyles. Partnership working also has a significant impact in supporting a range of mandatory services.

4. General Background Information

- 4.1. At the meeting of the Executive on 1st December 2005 Members agreed that in order to build on the recommendations outlined by the Audit Commissions Review on the Councils approach to Partnership Working, that Wiltshire Wildlife Trust be evaluated as a key partner using the new Partnership Evaluation Tool.
- 4.2. At the meeting of the Executive on 6th January 2006 Members agreed that in order for the review of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to be carried out effectively, that the review would report back to the March Executive rather than at the end of January as previously agreed.
- 4.3. A significant amount of funding is committed from the Council's budget through Service Level and Partnership Agreements. Building on the recommendations of the Audit Commission Review on the Council's approach to partnership working, it was agreed that all the Councils key partnerships should be evaluated to ensure that they provide value for money and are robustly managed. To undertake the reviews and to build on current good practice, a Partnership Evaluation Tool was developed and is being tested on the review of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

5. Discussion

- 5.1. The outcomes and findings of the review of the Councils Partnership with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.2. The Partnership Development Officer has been working with officers from both service areas across the Council and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to undertake the review. There are three areas that make up the Council's overall partnership with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, these are:
- Energy Efficiency
 - Environmental grants (3 Bio-diversity Projects)
 - World Changers (formally Local Agenda 21)
- 5.3. The total amount of funding given in 2005/6 was £27,500, which covered the services or projects outlined above. In the cases of the Energy Efficiency and World Changers programmes they are currently managed through Service Level Agreements whereas the three bio-diversity projects are supported via an Environmental Grant that comes with a set of conditions agreed each year.
- 5.4. The review has highlighted that the work the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust undertakes as a result of the partnership funding, enables the Council to meet a number of its key mandatory duties. The Energy Efficiency project contributes significantly to the requirements set out in the Home Energy Conservation Act 2005, where the Council has a duty to report the steps being taken to improve energy efficiency across the residential properties in the district. A target of a 30% improvement is to be achieved by 2010 and so far the Council has achieved 17.5%.
- 5.5. The three Bio-diversity projects supported by the environmental grant also cover a number of mandatory duties that the Council is required to deliver. One of the projects is the Biological Records Centre which co-ordinates all of the information relating to environmental and conservation characteristics of the area. Last year the centre screened 3,520 planning applications in North Wiltshire, which equates to 28% of the total number of screenings across the county, making this Council the highest user of the service. The Wildlife Sites project and the Re-building bio-diversity project both enable the Council to meet a number of mandatory duties. "Planning Policy Statement 9" and the "Countryside and Open Space strategy" are two examples of this, with all three directly impacting on the Councils own priority on Spatial Planning and the development of the core strategy.
- 5.6. The World Changers programme focuses on the sustainability agenda and picks up on the work previously undertaken under the Agenda 21 theme. One of the main outcomes of the work so far has been the development of the "Green Map." The Green Map is a website that helps people find out and get involved in local environment projects. The work of the World Changers programme directly relates to issues being raised by Community Area Partnerships and the Local Strategic Partnership. The World Changers programme also compliments other projects run by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and has added significant value to some of the energy efficiency work that Council also funds.

- 5.7 The review has demonstrated that apart from the mandatory duties the partnership enables the Council to meet, the work also brings significant added value to the district. As a result of the Energy Efficiency work, the community has been able to lever out national grants to the sum of £44,500 to help improve energy efficiency in their homes. The World Changers programme is another good example in that it has acted as a funding lever to projects such as “Climate Friendly Communities.”
- 5.8 One of the weaknesses of the partnership is that there seems to be lack of clarity at a corporate level of the amount of funding given to the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and the work undertaken as a result of the partnership. This reiterates the findings of the Audit Commission review, in that there needs to be more communication across service areas when funding the same organisation. Ensuring there is a cross service area appreciation of the work being delivered will enable a more strategic approach to managing the partnership overall and will provide a wider corporate awareness.
- 5.9 The overall findings of the review clearly demonstrate that the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust provide value for money for the work they undertake. The projects meet both mandatory and discretionary areas of the Councils work and bring significant added value to the local community. The partnership working between the officers of the Council and the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust is very robust but it is important that this becomes more strategic, so that a more corporate approach to the partnership can be achieved.

6 Moving the Review Forward

- 6.1 In light of the evidence that the review has collated regarding the outcomes and overall direction of the partnership, a number of key recommendations have been identified. The recommendations have been developed using the Partnership Evaluation Tool and will now form a path for continuous improvement to ensure that the partnership can be strengthened in the future.
- 6.2 In order to implement the review recommendations, and to pick up on other aspects of the partnership approach with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust it is proposed that an action plan be developed. Officers will work with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust over the coming year to address the recommendations and to make the necessary changes to the partnership in order to strengthen it further and to maintain and improve on the value for money that is already being demonstrated.
- 6.3 One of the key actions following the review will be to develop more corporate awareness and understanding of the partnership with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and the outcomes it delivers and the contributions made towards Council priorities. One of the ways this will be achieved is that officers from the service areas who work in partnership with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust will meet twice a year to share knowledge of current activity and progress being made.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8 Community & Environmental Implications

- 8.1 Partnership working offers opportunities for the Council to strengthen communities and service delivery. This in turn can help to ensure that community needs and priorities are addressed in a way that maximises the use of available resources for local people.

8.2 Working in partnership brings many benefits such as volunteering opportunities for the local community, added value to Council services and enables the Council to meet its responsibilities under the Wiltshire Compact.

9 Equal Opportunities Implications

9.1 The Council's approach to partnership working and consultation aims to be as inclusive as possible. The Compact and the associated codes of practice will consolidate and reinforce this approach.

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT STRATEGIC MANAGER TO THE EXECUTIVE - 9th MARCH 2006

Documents used in the preparation of Report

None

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