

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE

Report No. 14

Date of Meeting	12 th July 2007
Title of Report	Evaluation of the North Wiltshire Partnership
Portfolio	Customers & Partners
Link to Corporate Priorities	Partnership Working
Key Decision	No
Executive Workplan Ref	B336
Public Report	Yes

Summary of Report

This report provides Members with the outcomes of the evaluation of the North Wiltshire Partnership (NWP), the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the district.

Since January 2006 the Council adopted the use of the Partnership Evaluation Tool to monitor and improve its partnership arrangements in response to Audit Commission recommendations in 2005. Following the successful evaluations of key partners with Service Level Agreements last year, it was agreed that focus be directed towards wider partnerships where the Council is a partner. This report demonstrates the first use of the Council's Evaluation Tool on a wider strategic partnership of which the Council is a member of and invests resource into.

The Council has a mandatory responsibility to prepare a Community Strategy through the LSP and given its commitment to supporting the North Wiltshire Partnership through officer resource, it was deemed appropriate to evaluate this Partnership.

During 2006 there has been an increase in the activity and capacity of the North Wiltshire Partnership following the recruitment of the LSP Manager. The evaluation has examined the different issues facing the Partnership, and has identified areas for development and highlighted areas of concern. Following this work the NWP has developed an implementation plan to build on the areas for development highlighted in the evaluation.

Officer Recommendations: It is recommended that:

Members note the outcomes and recommendations of the evaluation of the North Wiltshire Partnership, as attached in Appendix 1, in line with Option 1 and agree that the Council supports the Partnership in implementing the evaluation recommendations.

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
YES	NONE	YES	NONE	YES

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides Members with the outcomes of the partnership evaluation of the North Wiltshire Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership for the district.
- 1.2 The evaluation of partnerships and the use of the Partnership Evaluation Tool forms part of the approach the Council is taking to monitoring and improving its partnership arrangements. It was agreed that the Partnership Development Officer and the LSP Manager would work to evaluate the Partnership jointly, as this was a process that both the North Wiltshire Partnership and the Council would mutually benefit from.
- 1.3 This report forms part of the programme of work being undertaken by the Council to strengthen its Partnership working arrangements. Members may want to consider in the future how they wish to be updated on the outcomes of this work.

2. Options and Options Appraisal

2.1 Option 1: Members note the outcomes and recommendations of the evaluation of the North Wiltshire Partnership, as attached in Appendix 1, and agree that the Council supports the Partnership in implementing the evaluation recommendations.

- 2.1.1 This programme of work forms part of the response to the Audit Commission review on the Councils approach to partnership working in 2005. The Partnership Development Officer was tasked to evaluate the Councils key partnerships and to subsequently work with officers and partners in implementing the evaluation recommendations. This work is ongoing and will enable the Council to develop a corporate approach to its partnership working.
- 2.1.2 The North Wiltshire Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership for the district. It is the only partnership at a district wide level that brings together the principal service providers with members of the Community and the Voluntary Sector. Supporting its development is therefore important to ensure that there is opportunity for services to be developed jointly in partnership, which can bring added value to the community.
- 2.1.3 Under the Local Government Act 2000, "Principal Authorities" hold the responsibility for producing the Community Strategies. For the Community Strategy to be successfully implemented requires a wider partnership approach and currently the North Wiltshire Partnership as the Local Strategic Partnership offers the platform in which to undertake this work.
- 2.1.4 Implementation of the recommendations outlined in Appendix 1 will ensure that the Partnership is strengthened further, and builds upon the commitment of Partners that already exists to ensure a robust North Wiltshire Partnership is in place.

2.2 Option 2: That Members propose an alternative option to that outlined in Option 1

- 2.2.1 Members agreed to adopt the Partnership Evaluation Tool as a mechanism in which to evaluate the Councils key partnerships. This tool is based on best practice and to detract from it would result in the Councils approach to partnership working becoming inconsistent.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 In 2004 the Council's CPA report highlighted a number of areas surrounding the Council's approach to and organisation of partnership working. More specifically the report detailed the Council's lack of strategic mechanisms for reviewing the work of partnerships and the lack of clarity over the roles and responsibilities of the Council in its various partnerships.
- 3.2 In response to this a Partnership Evaluation Tool was subsequently developed by Officers in 2006 to provide a strategic mechanism for monitoring the outcomes and effectiveness of the partnerships the Council is involved in.
- 3.3 During 2006 the Council evaluated two of its partnerships it provides funding to (Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and the North Wiltshire Citizens Advice Bureau). It was agreed that following the successful completion of this work that focus should be directed towards one of the larger strategic partnerships the Council is a member of.
- 3.4 Given the Council's commitment to supporting the North Wiltshire Partnership both as a member and through the officer resource it provides as support, it was felt appropriate that this Partnership should be evaluated next as part of this programme of work.
- 3.5 There are a number of factors, which made it timely to conduct a full evaluation of the North Wiltshire Partnership:
- The membership of the Partnership has continued to grow since it was formed in 2004
 - The LSP Manager was appointed in July 2006 which has enhanced the capacity of the Partnership
 - The Community Strategy for North Wiltshire was published in 2005; this informed the development of supporting action plans adopted by the NWP.
 - Discussion is underway regarding the re-shaping of the Community Strategy into a Sustainable Community Strategy in line with government recommendations
 - The Partnership has not undertaken any form of formal review since its formation.
- 3.6 The evaluation has addressed the following areas:
- Does the North Wiltshire Partnership have a clearly defined role with a shared purpose between the members of the Partnership and external stakeholders based on local priorities and community need?
 - Does the current structure of the Partnership enable it to fulfil its role and purpose? If not, does the structure need to be modified to enable progressive delivery?
 - Is the North Wiltshire Partnership best placed to be the pivotal Partnership in order to deliver outcomes against the identified priorities?

4. Main findings from the Evaluation

- 4.1 Members can find the Executive summary of the main evaluation report in Appendix 1. Copies of the full detailed findings "The Evaluation of the North Wiltshire Partnership" report will be placed in Members rooms and will be available on request.
- 4.2 The evaluation identified that the North Wiltshire Partnership has a number of strengths and as a result has made steady progress over the last few years. With the appointment of the LSP Manager capacity for the Partnership has been increased.

- 4.3 Although there are a number of strengths the evaluation has also highlighted three principle areas of development that officers feel the Partnership must address in order for it to progress further and remain a viable group. The three areas for development are:
- Direction
 - Infrastructure & Governance
 - Communication
- 4.4 **Direction:** The direction of the Partnership is unclear and as a result is restricting the Partnership from fulfilling its roles, as outlined in the Community Strategy. The current Community Strategy no longer represents accurately the environment in which the Partnership operates, and as a result has hindered the NWP from evolving effectively to respond to local priorities.
- 4.5 The evaluation has recommended to the Partnership that it undertake a programme of work, which defines a clear ambition alongside a set of outcomes that the Partnership can monitor its progress against and demonstrate to its stakeholders the added value it brings. It is proposed that this can be achieved by embedding the Sustainable Communities Agenda and supporting the development of a re-shaped Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 4.6 **Infrastructure & Governance:** This is a key priority area for development that the Partnership must address. Principally it requires the development of the current structure and the process by which the Partnership operates. An effective partnership structure needs to be implemented to establish a framework for strategic decision-making, planning and a line for delivery.
- 4.7 The current structure has become one-dimensional leading to confusion around the roles and responsibilities of Partners. Officers have identified that this could pose a risk to the effectiveness of the Partnership and therefore reduce the value placed on it by Partners. The introduction of a new structure as detailed in Appendix 1 will enable the Partnership to better deliver on its ambition and will go some way to ensuring the efficient use of partner resources. A new structure intends to streamline the workings of the partnership and this will be seen with the introduction of a Board and a Co-ordination group rather than one group trying to be strategic and delivery focused at the same time. To achieve this is going to require the Partnership to change its current working practices.
- 4.8 Alongside the development of the structure the evaluation has identified that equal weight must be placed on addressing the manner in which the Partnership operates and monitors its progress. The Partnership must develop a more robust approach to its governance and introduce a more performance led approach. This way it can jointly address up and coming issues facing service providers based on local need, and as a result be able to demonstrate clearly how it has made an impact and where progress has been made.
- 4.9 **Communication:** The evaluation has identified that the Partnership needs to continue its programme of work in improving its communication both externally and internally as a group. It has been recognised that the Partnership is making significant progress in addressing this issue through the development of its Communication Strategy and the creation of a Communications sub group, but it is important that this work continues during the next 12 months.

5. Discussion

- 5.1 Officers are of the opinion following the evaluation that at present the Partnership is not fulfilling its role effectively and as a result is not maximising its potential. Although this is the present opinion, officers do feel that the Partnership could have an important role to play. This is based within the context of potentially supporting the governance of the Local Area Agreement, the development of a Sustainable Community Strategy and the focus of the recent Government White Paper (Delivering Strong and Prosperous Communities).
- 5.2 The appointment of an LSP Manager has increased the capacity available to the Partnership and as a result the evaluation from the Partnership's perspective has been able to take place. The evaluation identifies that whilst increased capacity will no doubt support the development of the Partnership, for real change to occur requires the full commitment and involvement of all partners. It is this element that must now be taken on for the Partnership to progress effectively.
- 5.3 Crucially the evaluation recommendations should be seen as an opportunity for the North Wiltshire Partnership to progress to the next level and become more effective in delivering its role and being able to demonstrate how it is having an impact. The recommendations set out a path for continuous improvement that officers feel will support the Partnership through this transition period.
- 5.4 The Council has committed a significant amount of resource and officer time to the development of the North Wiltshire Partnership. For this to remain good value for money requires the Partnership to demonstrate how it is addressing the areas for development outlined in the evaluation, and evidence through its reporting the added value it brings to the district.
- 5.5 Although the Council has taken the lead in developing the North Wiltshire Partnership as a result of its requirements under the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that for significant progress to be made that the other partners take on responsibility for improving the Partnership as well.
- 5.6 The Council currently has a Member who sits on the North Wiltshire Partnership alongside the Deputy Chief Executive. It is important that the Council participates fully through its membership in the forthcoming development of the North Wiltshire Partnership following this evaluation.

6. Moving the review forward

- 6.1 The LSP Manager and the Partnership Development Officer presented the evaluation findings to the North Wiltshire Partnership at the meeting held on the 16th April. The Partnership has endorsed the report and work is now underway to finalise an implementation plan, which will address in detail, how the evaluation recommendations will be implemented.
- 6.2 The resulting implementation plan will require all Partners to re-sign up to the new structure and to any changes in membership or resource requirements such as officer involvement. The Council is a member of the North Wiltshire Partnership and will be required to go through this process once formally contacted by the Partnership. It is proposed that Officers bring another report to Executive once this request has been received outlining any proposed changes and seeking endorsement of them.

- 6.3 The North Wiltshire Partnership will be holding a conference on Tuesday 3rd July. The conference will be a vehicle for Partners and wider stakeholders to address some of the issues facing the NWP and agree how progress will be made.

7. Community & Environment Implications

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 Working in partnership brings many benefits and enables added value to Council services.

8. Equality & Diversity Implications

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment for the Community Planning, Community Area Awards and the Partnership Working service area has been completed. The Community Partnership Team holds a copy of this assessment.
- 8.2 The North Wiltshire Partnership has identified the importance of a robust approach to equalities and diversity and as result will be developing an equalities statement as part of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 Although there are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report, resource will be required to implement the recommendations of the evaluation.
- 9.2 The Council allocated £72,000 PSA reward grant funding to the North Wiltshire Partnership in 2005. This funding is presently financing the LSP Manager. As the evaluation demonstrates, such a role is key to the sustainability of the North Wiltshire Partnership and all North Wiltshire Partnership Members (including the District Council) will need to consider how this post could be funded beyond the end of the financial year.

10. Risk Analysis

- 10.1 There are no significant risks to the Council resulting directly from the recommendations of this report.
- 10.2 Although there are no significant risks, the evaluation has identified a number of key areas for development that the North Wiltshire Partnership must address in order for it to remain a viable group. If the Partnership is unable to successfully implement the recommendations over the next 12 months, then this may start to present a risk to how the Council supports the delivery of the Community Strategy for which it is responsible.

Appendices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix 1: Evaluation of the North Wiltshire Partnership – Executive Summary - April 2007
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the North Wiltshire Partnership – Full Report • The Partnership Evaluation Tool

Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

Report	Committee & Date	Minute Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please list any previous reports or state None. 		