

**Wiltshire Council**

**Organisation & Resources Select Committee**

**24 March 2011**

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## **Partnerships Task Group Final Report**

### **Purpose**

1. To report the findings to emerge from the review of the Community Safety Partnership.

### **Background**

2. Previous updates have introduced the legislative changes that provided Overview & Scrutiny (OS) with greater power to scrutinise our partners. The Committee responded to these by creating a Task Group to examine the options available to best deliver partnership scrutiny. Reflecting on best practice this review concluded that a Task Group was the best approach. This was subsequently created with the following membership:

Cllr Desna Allen  
Cllr Jane Burton  
Cllr Chris Caswill  
Cllr Peter Colmer  
Cllr Chris Humphries  
Cllr Jonathon Seed  
Cllr Roy While (Chairman)

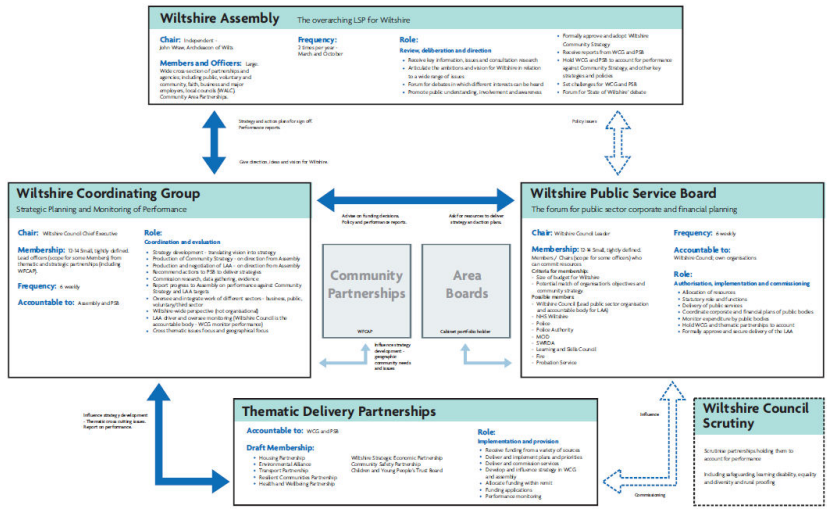
3. The Task Group met in March 2010 to scope the review, with the main goal of identifying an initial partnership area to review. Following consideration of the Local Agreement for Wiltshire (the Strategic Plan for the county) and the Local Area Agreement, the Members agreed to begin their work by scrutinising the Community Safety Partnership.
4. As part of the review the Members have also attempted to understand the wider governance structure for partnership working across the county and, self-evaluated whether the Task Group model adopted was an effective way for delivering this type of external scrutiny.

### **Governance & Membership**

5. In Wiltshire the Local Strategic Partnership is called the 'Family of Partnerships'. This is headed by the Wiltshire Assembly, the overarching Local Strategic Partnership for the county. Sitting under the Assembly is the Wiltshire Coordinating Group, mainly officer led with responsibility for planning and performance. Parallel to this group is the Public Service Board, led by the leader with responsibility for corporate and financial planning. Underneath these are the 8 thematic partnerships with responsibility for delivering the

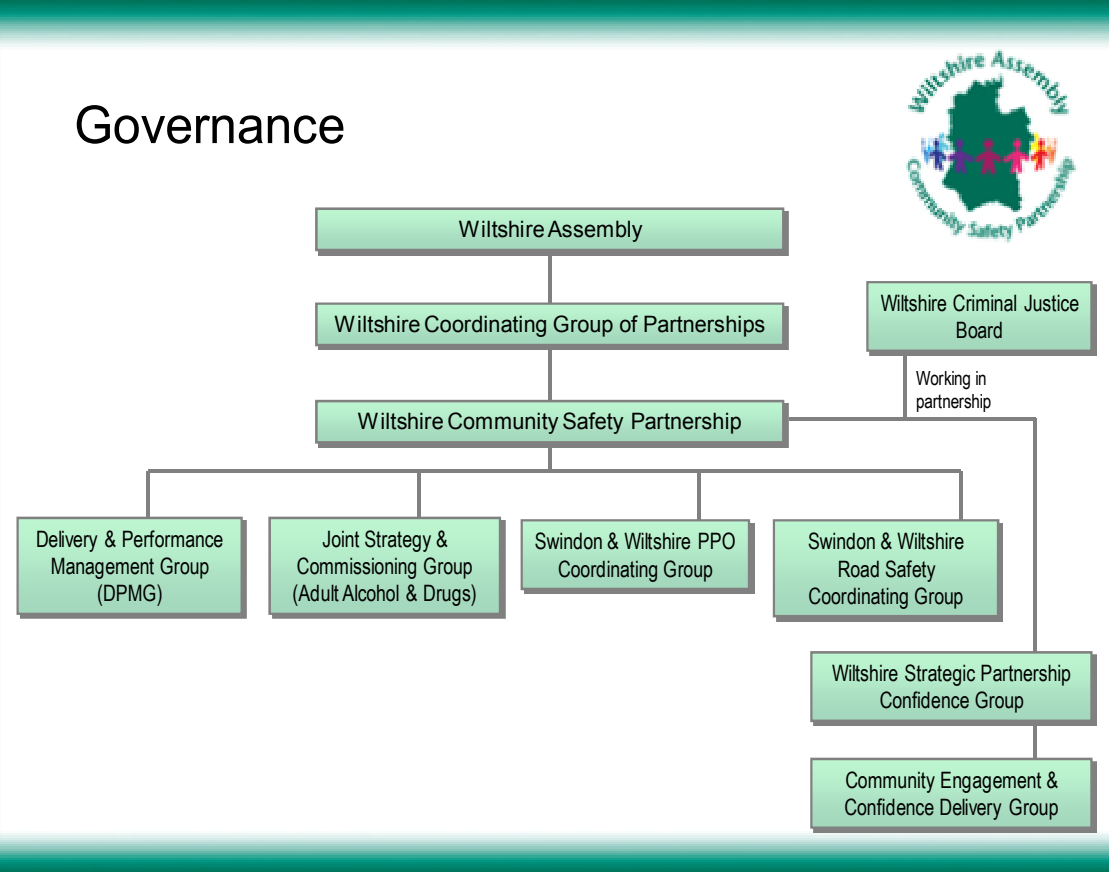
aims of the Local Agreement for Wiltshire, included within which is the **Community Safety Partnership**.

**Diagram 1 – The Family of Partnerships**



6. During its first meeting the Task Group was introduced to the governance structure for the Community Safety Partnership. The majority of the review focused towards the work of the Executive Board (Wiltshire Community Safety Partnership as below), which met quarterly and is chaired by Maggie Rae – the Joint Director for Public Health.

**Diagram 2 – Community Area Partnership Governance Structure**



7. The Community Safety Partnership comprises a number of statutory members:

Wiltshire Council  
Wiltshire Police  
Wiltshire Police Authority  
NHS Wiltshire  
Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service  
Wiltshire Probation Trust

In addition a number of other agencies also are involved:

Voluntary Organisations  
Registered Social Landlords  
WASP (Wiltshire Addiction Support Project)  
Youth Offending Service

8. As part of the information gathering process the Task Group spoke with the following officers:

Mandy Bradley – Service Director for Public Protection  
Tim Mason – Interim Project Manager  
Maggie Rae – Chairman Joint Director of Public Health  
Pat Geenty - Assistant Chief Constable  
Diana Fulbrook - Chief probation Officer

9. From the information provided from these meetings the Task Group was introduced to the overarching aim and priorities for the Partnership:

**Aim** -to be ‘**the Safest County within England**’, with 5 key priorities for 2011-12:

- Violence; Domestic Abuse and Night Time Economy
- Anti-social behaviour
- Integrated Offender Management
- Substance Misuse
- Road Safety



**Wiltshire Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment**

September 2010



The Task Group in exploring the work being undertaken to realise these goals identified a series of overarching challenges and issues, which will form the basis of the next ‘results’ section of the report:

## **Key Issues**

### **Historic Challenge**

10. A clear message to emerge from all the officers providing information was that there had been significant improvements in the (approx) 18 months that the new Chairman had led the board. Historically the Partnership had experienced a number of difficulties, attendance was unsatisfactory and it was a body that found it difficult to get things done. For a partnership to be successful Members were told that senior officers needed to buy-in and ensure that they supported meetings. Reassurance was given that the appointment of a new Chairman had led to a new positive culture, transforming Community Safety into a 'can-do' body with all partners in support. An example of this was the introduction of elected Councillors onto the Board by the new leadership team i.e. the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety – Cllr Keith Humphries and Cllr Chris Humphries representing the Police Authority.
11. The Chairman of the Task Group and supporting officer were provided with the opportunity to gain firsthand experience of watching the Partnership work together, by attending the December (2010) Board meeting. Attendance there was good, including the Cabinet Member and senior officers representing the various agencies. The agenda included presentations from two individuals who had been positively supported by the work of the Partnership. This was to ensure that the Executive Board retained a focus on how their policies were impacting at 'ground level'. A further example of this commitment was that the Board had recently attended night time visits to hot-spot areas such as Salisbury and Trowbridge to visualise the joint working taking place on the streets.
12. This issue provided key lessons in terms of what is required to ensure an effective partnership and the Task Group will look to reinforce the role and value of local Members at the end of this report.

### **Integrated working**

13. One of the primary challenges for the Partnership had been to move from a silo approach where agencies worked independently on personal objectives to one where there was an integrated philosophy with 'joined-up' working. The Task Group was told that this had proved difficult but by choosing priorities which were joint specific (as in paragraph 10), the partnership had slowly developed a new culture of working.
14. As well as having cross-cutting objectives, the Task Group was told that the physical integration of teams from the various partners was as an important tool towards delivering the theoretical model into practice. For example, Probation, Police and the Housing Services could all work together in the same office, with all the benefits of the close proximity communication that this arrangement would bring. Members learnt that Basingstoke was an

example of where this approach had been used and was cited as an example of good practice.

15. In addition to having physical integration as an ambition, the Partnership was in the process of introducing a case-management system to ensure partners were accessing the same database. This virtual integration would be seen as a reinforcement of this joint approach and could be used to reinforce Partnership initiatives such as 'Restorative Justice', which sees people guilty of criminal activity such as graffiti having to rectify their actions.
16. The Task Group acknowledged the positive steps taken to move towards more of a joint approach, but recognised that identifying the investment required to fund physical integration was challenging whilst agencies were unpicking the repercussions of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

### **Accurate data**

17. The Wiltshire Council Research Unit now reported to the Joint Director of Public Health. This had enabled the Partnership to access accurate 'community safety' data to unpick the landscape across the county. For example the Partnership was now able focus on 'hot spots', namely Salisbury, Trowbridge and Chippenham which were absorbing an intensive amount of resources from Police and other agencies and were still producing higher levels of crime and disorder than any other area. The accurate data allowed the Partnership to quantify whether the perception of crime was matched by the statistics.
18. The data could also be broken-down by Community Area, which it was hoped would help enable communities to take responsibility for their own community safety, as discussed later in the report.
19. The Task Group welcomed the accuracy this data could bring and recognised its value in a being able to facilitate resources being directed to the right areas.

### **Fluid landscape**

20. It was clear throughout the review that any report from scrutiny would be an interim position, as the landscape for Community Partnerships was constantly evolving. For instance there is the example of the forthcoming change in the governance arrangements for the Police, with the proposal of an elected Police Commissioner, with potential change in priorities to emerge following this appointment. Officers also confirmed that a new document had been published in March by the Home Office called 'A New Approach To Fighting Crime', this reinforced the role of the Community Safety Partnership whilst committing the Police to having a singular focus for reducing crime.
21. Further examples of change included amendments to tool-kits to tackle anti-social behaviour, with the removal of such things as the Anti-Dispersal Order and the Dog Control Order.

22. Recognising the speed of change in this area, the Task Group felt that the communication of these reforms was vital, especially to the members of the public who would be key players in helping to deliver the Partnership priorities.

### **Financial pressures**

23. Following the recent Comprehensive Spending Review, financial challenges had been placed upon most public service bodies; Community Safety was no exception. A number of staff working for the Partnership had their posts funded by grants; therefore their long term future was uncertain following changes in funding arrangements.
24. The recent Business Plan adopted by the Council highlighted that the public identified Community Safety as one of their priorities. However faced with demographic changes, an ageing population and a reduction in funding the Council identified a series of key priorities, which did not include in detail Community Safety goals.
25. Financial pressure on the Police had been high profile recently. One of the challenges to emerge within the review was the stretch on resources for the Police in supporting two Community Safety Partnerships i.e. Wiltshire and Swindon. Working with the two was a stretch on resources, compounded by the spending cuts. From other members of the Partnership there was not the same desire to amalgamate because of the different community safety issues evident between the mainly rural county and the urban Swindon.
26. The Task Group recognised that with reduced resources there was even more pressure on the Partnership being an enabler and this has been reflected in the recommendations of the report.

### **Communication**

27. As touched upon earlier in the report, one of the key ambitions for Partnership over the next three years was the need to engage with communities across Wiltshire, to help secure the aim of being the safest county in the country. The Partnership team is a finite resource and it was recognised that as well as tackling community safety issues itself, it had to be an enabler for communities to empower them to take individual responsibility for their respective towns and villages. Area Boards were viewed as an important cog in this process, with community safety data to be broken down by Community Area, it was hoped the Boards could be leaders in communicating and taking a responsibility for the Partnership ambitions.
28. The Task Group was supportive of this ambition and felt that the use of special single topic Area Board meetings, based on local community safety issues, could prove an invaluable tool in engaging the community towards understanding and supporting the goals of the Partnership.

29. During the review acknowledgement was given to recent criticism from Councillors that some of the strategies produced by the Partnership felt slightly 'top-down' with a lack of engagement with Members. In response this commentary had been absorbed and strategies were being rewritten to reflect the role of councillors. The Task Group felt this could be developed further and have attempted to tackle this within the recommendations.
30. Over various meetings the Members have been provided with large amounts of literature, summarising the various strategies produced by the Partnership. The Task Group discussed with officers who was the audience for this material and felt that this could have been more specific. The Task Group agreed that by producing material directed towards the public or elected Members it would be possible to improve communications and ultimately deliver the aims of the Partnership.

## **Conclusion**

31. There have been two dimensions to this review, what we have learnt about how we approach the scrutiny of partners and what we have learnt about the Community Safety Partnership. Recognising the speed of change currently experienced across the public sector it is felt that the flexibility offered by a Task Group continues to be the correct approach. The Task Group format also offers the ability to shape meetings around partner availability, rather than an invitation being sent to attend a fixed committee date. The less formal Task Group setting also created an atmosphere where Officers and Members were happy to talk openly, although there is a responsibility on Members to follow the Task Group Protocol.
32. The Task Group will be asking the Committee to endorse its continuation, the Members would like to utilise the knowledge developed and consider another Partnership; there is also important work relating to the new strategic document which will replace the existing Local Agreement for Wiltshire.
33. In respect of the Community Safety Partnership the officers have positively engaged with the Task Group, accommodating meeting requests and inviting Scrutiny Members to attend their Executive Board Meeting.
34. Members learnt that the Partnership has enabled public agencies to work together to tackle problems that do not sit neatly within one agency's remit. It was felt that under the tenure of the new Chairman the Partnership had been more effective
35. The Partnership through accurate data capture and interpretation has also been able to develop a map of the county which identifies what community safety related activity is taking place. This accurate picture rather than perception has enabled the team to focus resources to the right areas.
36. The Partnership now faces financial challenges, as budgets become squeezed. However the real difficulty relates to the ambition to empower communities to help achieve the overall aim of making Wiltshire the safest

county in England. The Task Group felt that the local Member could be an important tool in this process, both at individual and Area Board levels. To gain community support it is important to engage the elected community champion. By providing literature that is directed to Members and providing them with the tools to help their community tackle community safety issues, they can be a powerful supporter of the Partnership.

## **Recommendations**

37. The Committee is requested to endorse the following Task Group recommendations, the majority of which will then be sent to the Community Safety Partnership's Chairman and Cabinet Member for consideration:

- a) To approve the continuation of the Task Group to scrutinise further partnership working;
- b) To recommend to the Community Safety Partnership that they produce a tool-kit directed towards elected Members, which provides them with important contact information and a summary of the powers available to promote and enforce the ambitions of the Partnership;
- c) To ask the Partnership to provide elected Members with a regular update on their achievements, to include any legislative reforms such as changes to tool-kits (e.g anti-dispersal order) using the council's Members' briefing system or Elected Wire;
- d) To recommend that the Cabinet Members with responsibility for Community Safety and Area Boards discuss how the Area Boards can be used to empower communities with the Task Group highlighting the potential of single item meetings to tackle Community Safety issues specific to that community;
- e) To request an update from the Community Safety Partnership in 6 months time.

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CLlr Roy While – Chairman: Partnerships Scrutiny Task Group

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