

Central Dudley Area Committee 13th March 2007

Report of the Director of the Dudley Community Partnership

Dudley Community Partnership, and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund spend in Central Dudley Area

Purpose of Report

1. To update Central Dudley Area Committee on the role of Dudley Community Partnership and to highlight funding spent to support regeneration in the Central Dudley Area between 2004 and 2007.

Background

2. Dudley Community Partnership (DCP) is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the Dudley Borough. An LSP is a non-statutory body which brings together local public, private, community and voluntary sectors to create a multi agency partnership.
3. The DCP currently has an independent chair, Khurshid Ahmed, who attends as a Dosti representative. Dudley Council leader, Cllr Caunt, is currently vice-chair. The DCP Board members represent a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies, e.g. Dudley MBC, Dudley Primary Care Trust, West Midlands Police, Dosti, FE Colleges, Black Country Chamber, Federation of Small Businesses, Job Centre Plus, Learning and Skills Council, West Midlands Fire Service etc. The DCP Board is the strategic decision making body, and is supported by theme partnerships in terms of delivery
4. The Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* issued in October 2006 alluded to a strengthened role for LSPs, stating, "Our expectation is that LSPs should be the overarching strategic partnership, bringing together a manageable number of key thematic partnerships to deliver the priorities agreed in the LAA and Sustainable Community Strategy." (DCLG, 2006: 98) Dudley currently has 6 theme partnerships – Children & Young People, Health & Wellbeing, Strategic Housing and Environment Partnership, Safe & Sound, Dudley Learning Partnership, and Economic Development and Enterprise.
5. A key role for LSP's is the creation of a sustainable community strategy, a role it undertakes with Dudley MBC.
6. A new role for LSP's, introduced in 2004, is the drafting of a Local Area Agreement (LAA), a joint agreement between national Government and localities. An LAA includes of a range of mandatory targets, but also provides LSPs with a mechanism for agreeing joint priorities, that are intended to improve service delivery to the wider community. Alongside such priorities LSP's have to agree

with government a range of performance measures that will chart progress, and identify funding streams that support delivery.

7. LAA's are often described as the action plan for the sustainable community strategy albeit many aspirations within the community strategy will need to be addressed outside of the LAA process. Each LAA has a unique theme and Dudley's mirrors that of its community strategy in that it is centred around the creation of *Stronger Communities*. Specifically Dudley's LAA seeks to focus on narrowing the gap, ensuring effective community engagement, and addressing community cohesion.
8. LAAs are reviewed annually with Government and performance against target will be a measure of success by which LSP's are judged. LSP's are required to keep local communities informed as to the progress of both the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA.
9. The introduction of LAA's seeks to enable local partners to move from a service-delivery approach to a wider commissioning role, so as to improve service provision outcomes. The local authority will identify local needs, and plan to deliver or commission services, ensuring better service delivery through effective performance management. The role of the LSP is to ensure that the commissioning process is applied at both strategic and operational levels to facilitate service improvement, and to drive forward the LAA to ensure delivery. Any service delivery should give value for money, thus maximising public resources.
10. An LAA provides the opportunity for increased multi-agency partnership working to help drive efficiency, and lead to improved outcomes for local communities.
11. A key role for LSP's in 86 areas of the country is to use Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to support activity around narrowing the gap. Over the last three years Dudley has received the following amounts of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

2004/2005 - £1,521,000

2005/2006 - £1,521,000

2006/2007 - £1,577,000

Details of the full range of projects / activities funded via Neighbourhood Renewal Funding are outlined at Appendix A attached. Please note that Appendix A lists only those activities funded directly through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and that in addition to this, significant other regeneration activity takes place by single partner or multi-agency activity.

Dudley has also been allocated the sum of £1,839,038 for the period 2007/2008 but importantly this funding is to be 'pooled' within the LAA process.

12. Historically NRF has been allocated in response to requests for funding received from all manner of statutory, voluntary and community groups, but for 2007/2008 the partnership intends to move to a commissioning process to link in with the wider commissioning process encouraged within LAA's.
13. Additionally the LSP has at its disposal, funding accrued by partners as a result of success in achieving targets in Local Public Service Agreement Round 1, and has agreed to use such funding to support regeneration activities within the borough.

One recent example of such support was the grant of £70,000 to the Savoy Centre complex to help refurbish a community café.

14. Whilst funding is a useful catalyst for changing partner activity, the ultimate test of any partnership is the extent to which mainstream funds are realigned to support improved partnership arrangements.

Finance

15. There are no direct financial implications arising from consideration of this report

Law

16. Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires the Council to work together with other bodies to establish a strategy for promoting the well-being of its local communities

Equality Impact

17. The contents of this report will have a direct impact on equality issues and on issues relating to children and young people

Recommendation

18. That the information contained in the report and Appendix A of the report submitted be noted.

.....
Dennis Hodson
Director of Dudley Community Partnership

Contact Officer: Dennis Hodson
Telephone: 01384 814756
Email: Dennis.hodson@dudley.gov.uk