

MEETING OF THE NORTH NORFOLK COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP BOARD and LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIP CHAIRS

Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st June 2011, NNDC Offices, Holt Road, Cromer at 10:00 a.m.

Present:

Philip Burton (Chair)	North Norfolk District Council – Chief Executive
Helen Eales (DCllr)	North Norfolk District Council – Leader of the Council
Jon Clemo	Norfolk Rural Community Council – Chief Executive
Euan MacPherson	North Norfolk Business Forum – Vice Chair
John Archibald	Victory Housing Trust – Chief Executive
Debbie Bartlett	Norfolk County Council – Head of Planning, Policy & Partnerships
Mark Danson-Hatcher	Local Area Partnership Association & Poppyland Partnership - Chair
Linda Rogers	Voluntary Norfolk – Head of Communications & Engagement
Don Venvell	North Norfolk Skills Partnership - Chair
James Kearns	BUILD – Chief Executive & vcsTogether - Chair
Sarah Blyth (Sgt)	Norfolk Police
Jim Harding	Fakenham Area Partnership - Chair
Diana Clark	Griffon Area Partnership - Chair
Colin Kemp	Holt Area Partnership – Chair
Robin Combe	Holt Area Partnership – Vice Chair
Philip High (DCllr)	Holt Area Partnership – Board Member & District Councillor
Richard Price (DCllr)	Stalham with Happing Area Partnership Chair & District Councillor
Ann Webster	Upcher Community Partnership – Vice Chair
Peter Lynn	Wells Area Partnership - Chair

Officers in attendance:

Sheila Oxtoby	North Norfolk District Council – Deputy Chief Executive
Jill Fisher	North Norfolk District Council – Localities Manager
Beatrix Ward	NNCP Partnership Manager
Sharon Garth	NNCP Administrator

Guest

Mark Patchett	MPCS - Consultant
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1 INTRODUCTIONS

Philip Burton introduced Mark Patchett who would be giving a presentation on his independent review of the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) and vcsTogether. Round the table introductions were made.

2 SUMMARY OF PROCESS

In January 2011 the NNCP Board agreed to commission an independent study of the effectiveness of the LAPs and vcsTogether and how the existing structures can act as a springboard to the future in light of the expectations of Localism and the Big Society. A Board sub group comprised of Debbie Bartlett, Jon Clemo and Philip Burton was set up to agree a project brief (to procure) for a consultant to undertake this review. The subgroup received applications and Mark Patchett of MP Consultancy Services was subsequently appointed. Mark's remit was to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing arrangements in the context of benefit of community wellbeing, value for money and their current readiness at taking forward the Localism agenda. The review would look at

- the structures and status of LAPs as vehicles for community engagement and empowerment,
- their effectiveness when measured against the benefit to the community, stated priorities and overall value for money that would include an evaluation of return on investment by NNCP,
- the success of the Local Area Partnership Association (LAPA) as a vehicle for sharing best practice, problem solving and finding solutions to sustainability,
- a review of the aims and objectives of the vcsTogether project and the way it has evolved. The review was to take into consideration benefits delivered to the voluntary and community sector, benefits to statutory sector, return on project funding including additional leverage, sustainability and collective benefits to a wider North Norfolk.

3 PRESENTATION OF THE REVIEW OF LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIPS AND VCSTOGETHER

Mark Patchett opened by thanking everyone who had taken part in the review and praised the commitment to work and their passion to deliver on the ground community benefits. He explained the review largely focussed on the extent that the vcsTogether Forum and the LAPs were 'fit for future purpose', and acknowledged that in order to assess this he needed to gain an insight into the NNCP, its strategic partners and the culture of participation and delivery across the North Norfolk District.

Mark explained his methodology: it included desktop research, the preparation of an evaluation framework and interviews with NNCP partners, LAP Co-ordinators and Board representatives, vcsTogether Staff and Chair and the NNCP Partnership Manager.

Mark set the context both nationally which included the demise of Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships, and locally which included the North Norfolk Community Plan and priorities, the requirement for community engagement and a new approach to service delivery by strategic partners.

Mark then continued to describe his findings, conclusions and recommendations for vcsTogether project, the findings, success factors, value for money, sustainability and conclusions of the LAPs and LAPA.

Mark concluded the presentation with his overall conclusions, recommendations for LAPs, recommendations for LAPA and a summary of points to be taken into consideration when discussing the recommendations and making any decisions.

4 PLENARY SESSION

Philip Burton thanked Mark for his presentation that had highlighted a number of challenges ahead for everyone, and asked if there were any factual points that anyone wished to raise with Mark.

Linda Rogers asked Mark to clarify the statement that the services offered through VCS Together and Voluntary Norfolk were 'basic and low level'. Mark replied this was the perception that had been given by the voluntary and community group's spoken to when gathering the information for the report. Many of these groups were small as were their needs. Many used vcsTogether for advice and guidance, mailshots or a means of linking into other groups providing similar support and services. Linda wished it to be noted that at least 40% of organisations that are engaged with vcsTogether, especially the larger ones, are not limited by the borders of North Norfolk and engage with Voluntary Norfolk on a county level when appropriate.

James Kearns said he supported Linda's comment and added that a number of the vcsTogether steering group members were representatives from larger Voluntary & Community organisations who had structures in place that enabled them to add value 'in kind' to the smaller groups. James continued to say this was sometimes undervalued, as without these structures the services provided in North Norfolk would decline leading to less investment. Mark responded saying working together was very important and out of the 420+ organisations on Voluntary Norfolk's database many would not have received the benefits they have, however it was crucial that the support vcsTogether offers also gets to the remaining groups so that they too can benefit.

Linda Rogers added that Voluntary Norfolk's mechanisms for delivery in North Norfolk were not always through vcsTogether and asked Mark to clarify the definition pertaining to the LAPs 'could have delivered appropriate results better'. Mark replied each LAP had developed a variety of projects at a local level that had achieved mixed results generally providing good value. The implication was if they had done them differently would this have provided better results.

Philip Burton commented that lack of clarity surrounding their funding had been and was a challenge for the LAPs. When the LAPs were originally established there had been clarity on what was required which was set out in the terms of engagement and funding agreements however this had not been revisited in the last couple of years. Mark added the only requirement unfilled from the agreement by the LAPs was sustainability, and had found when talking to the Partners, their understanding differed from the 7 LAPs who differed from each other.

Philip asked if there were any further questions.

Don Venvell asked why the Skills Partnership had been left out of this piece of work as it played a major part in North Norfolk, championing skills across the District since 2006. The partnership was also crucial involved with and worked alongside the Business Forum on a number of initiatives. Philip explained that the criterion for this review was limited to community engagement projects. Learning and Skills is set to be a key priority in the next 4 years for the district and would need to be included in the making of future policies.

Questions from Diana Clarke, Mark Danson- Hatcher and Richard Price were put to Philip Burton on the future funding of the LAPs.

Philip responded to these questions saying the Minutes of the NNCP Board meeting held in March clearly said that LAPs would be funded for 6 months from the receipt of the reviews report. Philip went on to say a meeting of the NNCP Board would be arranged in the next 3-4 weeks where the recommendations put forward in the review would need to be discussed prior to any decisions being made.

Diana Clark said that it was her understanding from County that County and Local Strategic Partnerships across the country were gradually being disbanded or merged into other community forums and asked for clarity on who would be making the decisions on the recommendations in the report. Would it be the NNCP Board, the NNDC Cabinet or a combination of both i.e. agreed by the NNCP Board endorsed by the NNDC Cabinet.

Philip responded this would also form part of the discussions at the next NNCP Board meeting which would need to ensure that the views of all partners were taken into consideration.

Shiela Oxtoby said it was evident that there was a requirement to develop a process complete with timescale to work through any future funding commitments of the North Norfolk LSP.

Philip Burton thanked everyone for attending and for the range of interesting questions and comments which had been put forward, with particular thanks to Debbie Bartlett and Jon Clemo for their help in putting together the review of the LAPs and vcsTogether brief and the selection process.

Philip asked for comments on the report to be submitted to him within the next 2 weeks.

Mark Patchett said a copy of the amended report accompanied by a copy of the presentation would be sent to Sharon Garth by 9:00 am on the 22nd June for circulation.

Meeting closed 12:15 pm