

COMMUNITY PLANNING TASK FORCE

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING GROUP

Briefing paper for meeting on 17 may 2001

1. At the last meeting of the Group it was recognised that there was already a considerable amount of good practice information on effective partnership and joined up working. This paper reviews the recommendations of these documents, and outlines a number of ideas for discussion about the Working Group's priorities and approach. Documents identified by the Group included:
 - Scottish Executive study of Funding Cross Cutting Working
 - Making It Happen
 - DETR Guidance on Strategic Partnerships
 - DETR Guidance on Community Strategies
 - Scottish Executive report on Effective Implementation
 - Michael Carley's study of SIPs and Locality Budgeting
2. This paper briefly reviews this documentation as a basis for further work.

Scottish Executive report on Effective Implementation (Making a Difference, June 2000)

Based on a stock take of cross cutting working, the report makes the following recommendations:

- Better consultation arrangements between Executive and delivery agencies
- Sponsorship arrangements within the Executive to be renewed to reflect cross cutting issues
- Internal management information and co-ordination arrangements to be improved within Executive
- Delivery agencies should consider scope for rationalising partnerships on a local basis
- Higher government profile for community planning
- Any reviews of boundaries of agencies to take into account coterminosity
- Review of financial issues to clarify guidance on pooling budgets, consider any changes required and evaluate local experience to date
- Develop new accountability models for partnerships
- Reduce number of plans required of agencies
- Better synchronisation of agencies' planning cycles
- Modernising Government agenda should incorporate strengthened elements to support partnership activity

Scottish Executive study of Funding Cross Cutting Working (January 2001; unpublished)

Five themes identified:

- Rationalisation of funding cycles across the public sector
- More flexible funding arrangements with limited use of ring fencing and hypothecation
- An integrated audit and inspection regime
- A review of planning structures within the context of community planning
- Sponsorship by Scottish Executive divisions through a review of departmental priorities

Other issues: guidance required from Scottish Executive on joint funding arrangements across sectors, and on data protection issues in relation to data sharing.

Making it Happen (November 1999)

Consistent message about the need to join up policy and practice at the national as well as at the local levels. Identified recommendations based on a range of barriers to be overcome:

- Improved training and secondments to overcome cultural barriers to partnership working
- Consistent messages on commitment to partnership from leaders of public organisations
- Review by the Scottish Executive of financial and regulatory barriers to partnership working
- Executive should set objectives for departments which reflect partnership outcomes, not just departmental priorities
- More standardised data formats to enable sharing, and guidance on data protection
- Need to streamline partnership structures
- Stronger commitment to community planning by the Executive, and better sharing of good practice

DETR Guidance on Strategic Partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are intended to be high level strategic umbrella partnerships, which will implement community planning and oversee partnership activity in their areas. They are tasked with preparing community strategies (community plans by another name), bringing together partnerships, plans and initiatives, and they are expected to rationalise existing activity. They are also expected to adopt high level targets, take a lead role in the implementation of Public Service Agreements, and develop neighbourhood renewal strategies.

DETR Guidance on Community Strategies

Community strategies are the equivalent of community plans, required by statute under the Local Government Act (England) 2000. Guidance spells out current good practice in developing these documents, including:

- a long-term vision for the area focusing on the outcomes to be achieved;

- an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes;
- a shared commitment to implement the action plan and proposals for doing so;
- arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing the community strategy, and for reporting progress to local communities.

The strategies should allow local communities (based upon geography and/or interest) to articulate their aspirations, needs and priorities; co-ordinate the actions of the council, and of the public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally; focus and shape existing and future activity of those organisations so that they effectively meet community needs and aspirations; and engage and involve local communities. The strategies are expected to involve active participation of councillors within and outside the executive. They will be prepared and implemented by the local strategic partnership in their area.

Michael Carley's study of SIPs and Locality Budgeting

This study is based on experience of locality budgeting in two SIP areas. It recommends better linkage between locality budgeting and community planning, community empowerment and neighbourhood level initiatives. Improvements in locality budgeting are best sought in the context of programmes which seek to enhance the quality of partnerships and their capacity to engage in regeneration strategy development. Appropriate reward or incentive structures are also desirable.

3. Not surprisingly there is a great deal of correspondence in the main issues and recommendations between these documents. The Annex summarises the correspondence between the different recommendations. The recommendations can be broadly summarised as follows:
 - Measures to overcome cultural barriers, based on training and leadership
 - Measures to overcome process barriers:
 - Joined up financial and regulatory arrangements
 - Joining up scrutiny processes at the national scale
 - Improved data sharing
 - Streamlining partnerships and planning processes
 - Legislative barriers
4. It is notable that the majority of the recommendations fall to the Executive. The recent Green Paper includes the streamlining of partnerships and introduction of new powers to overcome legislative barriers. Work on training for partnership has been led by a CoSLA working group and a report is available and has been circulated separately. However, there appears to have been little progress on the other recommendations. There is clearly a ready made programme of activity for the Working Group to take forward.
5. The issues raised in these documents also fit closely with the priorities the Working Group identified at the last meeting, namely training, rationalisation of partnerships, performance management and good practice. The summary listed in 3 above can also be used as a basis for identifying incentives, the fourth priority area noted.

6. Two additional issues can also be identified for further consideration. These are:
 - defining the parameters of effective partnership working – there is a need to demonstrate which aspects of partnership working are truly effective, and there are a number of activities which would bear further analysis here, namely the ABC benchmarking exercise on community planning, the Verona model, and the community safety audit;
 - the concept of partnership governance – this involves the creation of a linked system of partnership management which can integrate and co-ordinate the activities of different partnerships under a community planning umbrella. This raises a number of questions about the relationship between partner agencies own governance structures, and about partners' roles.
7. The Working Group needs to consider how it wishes to prioritise these issues, and how it wishes to take them forward. Given that a great many of the recommendations lie with central government, the following options should be considered:
 - direct discussions with the Scottish Executive aimed at progressing the recommendations
 - commissioning work through the research officer, or other sources, to take forward some of these areas of work, to provide advice on good practice
 - to highlight in a report or otherwise the actions required of the Executive
8. A number of the recommendations are to do with a stronger lead or a higher profile from the Executive. The Working Group may consider how this should be done, and draft advice accordingly.
9. Issues to do with sharing good practice and rationalising partnerships will rely on case study information. This will require research assistance. It would be worth considering a priority request for research officer support to assist with this work. This would involve the following projects:
 - analysis of the Task Force questionnaire returns
 - review of partnership assessment and benchmarking exercises
 - identification and analysis of case study examples of good practice
 - review of other good practice guidance and related publications/studies
 - identification of case studies of partnership restructuring
 - identification of examples of incentives to good partnership working
10. This work could be shared between the research officer and the Working Group secretariat, but would need substantial input from the research officer. Additionally, Working Group members could draw on their own experience to identify case studies for further analysis. While there is undoubtedly a great deal of good practice in partnership working available, in Scotland and elsewhere, there is likely to be much more limited experience available to draw on in the area of rationalising partnerships. There may be a need consider alternative approaches in this area.

11. Key outputs from the Group's work would be achieving progress within the Scottish Executive on outstanding recommendations; highlighting case studies of good practice; and providing guidance on partnership working and restructuring.

Adam Kassyk
11 May 2001



ANNEX

Barriers to Effective Partnering	Making it Happen Nov 1999 ¹	Effective Implementation June 2000 ²	Legislative Proposals Nov 2000 ³	Funding Cross-Cutting Working Jan 2001 ⁴
Cultural barriers				
- training	✓			
- leadership	✓	✓		
Process barriers				
- financial / regulatory	✓	✓		✓
- scrutiny	✓	✓		✓
- data sharing	✓			✓
- streamlining partnerships	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislative barriers			✓	✓

References:

1. Making it Happen – report of the Strategy Action Team, Nov 1999
2. Making a Difference: Effective Implementation of Cross-Cutting Policy, Scottish Executive Policy Unit, June 2000
3. Power of Community Initiative etc: Scottish Executive Consultation Paper, Nov 2000; also Guidance on power of community well-being, DETR, March 2001 and Working with others to achieve Best Value, DETR, April 2001
4. Funding Cross-Cutting Working, Scottish Executive (unpublished)



CULTURAL BARRIERS

1. Partnership working needs to be embedded in the training programmes of all key professional bodies [Making it Happen].

Getting the right mix of skills within the Executive and delivery agencies to implement cross-cutting agenda and to work across professional boundaries. This has implications for pre and post qualification training and professional development, performance assessment and rewarding staff [effective implementation].
2. National Training Programme developed under listening to communities initiative addresses skills for partnership working ["Working together: Learning together skills development programme" in place for SIPs and Working with Communities Pathfinders].
3. Community learning strategies and community learning plans should address local needs for training in partnership working [Making it Happen].
4. Need for explicit training at senior and management level in partnership working [Making it Happen]. The cross-cutting agenda should be pursued across the public sector through the Scottish Leadership Foundation. Executive should invest in local leadership capacity and to reward positive organisational behaviours [effective implementation].
5. Major organisations should commit themselves to a programme of secondments [Making it Happen, effective implementation].
6. Leaders of public organisations should give a consistent, coherent message on their commitment to partnership working.
7. Executive gives a stronger and more consistent commitment to community planning [Making it Happen, effective implementation, establishment of Task Force].

PROCESS BARRIERS

1. Financial / Regulatory

1.1 Scottish Executive to review the financial and regulatory barriers to effective action [Making it Happen].

1.2 Review to address financial issues should:

- produce guidance on flexibility under current rules for pooling budgets and accounting for money
- consider changes in guidance / regulations

Further work should be undertaken on the scope for new accountability models for partnerships [effective implementation].

1.3 We recommend that:

- Scottish Executive should make funding allocations to major agencies at the same time, on basis of 3-year rolling programmes, with maximum flexibility over profile of funding allocations over period; and move away from ring-fencing / hypothecation to local outcome agreements
- Scottish Executive produce guidance for joint funding arrangements across sectors [funding cross-cutting working].

2. Scrutiny

2.1 More attention is paid by sponsoring departments in the Executive to setting objectives for agencies based on outcomes and which recognise their contribution to partnership working [Making it Happen].

2.2 Corporate contracts and guidance letters should reflect cross-cutting issues, as should agencies' strategic objectives. Agencies should be held to account by sponsor departments for their involvement in partnerships / scrutiny and inspection regimes can discourage partnership working [effective implementation].

2.3 We recommend that:

- at the project planning stage of any cross-cutting venture, issues of statutory authority, accountability and audit should be addressed; and Audit Scotland are brought into discussions at the early stages to look at the whole audit system for financial management, audit and performance

- the Scottish Executive consider the feasibility of organising the Inspectorates on a cross-cutting basis [funding cross-cutting working].

3. Data Sharing (to be referred to Charting Progress Working Group)

- 3.1 Digital Scotland Working Group consider need for a standardisation of data formats to permit data sharing and guidance on data protection. Promote sharing of good practice across agencies (including sharing of case work data) [Making it Happen].
- 3.2 The Community Planning Task Force should be asked to provide a guide to the data protection issues in relation to cross-cutting working [funding cross-cutting working].

4. Streamlining Partnerships

- 4.1 There is a need for streamlining partnerships in Scotland and new Executive initiatives should build upon existing structures, processes and partnerships rather than inventing new ones [Making it Happen].
- 4.2 Delivery agencies should consider the scope for rationalising current local partnership structures; there should be a moratorium on new partnership structures; community planning partnerships should take responsibility for maintaining local partnership structures; and when agencies' geographical boundaries are being reviewed the benefits to partnership working of coterminous boundaries are taken into account [effective implementation].
- 4.3 There is a case for streamlining partnership structures / planning requirements [legislative proposals].
- 4.4 Existing partnership structures should be used wherever possible; the examination of the proliferation of planning structures and their relationship to the Community Plan should be given a high priority by the Community Planning Task Force; and the importance of facilitating joint working should be a primary concern in any future reviews of the boundaries of public agencies [funding cross-cutting working].