
PARTNERSHIP UPDATE REPORT

1 SUMMARY

1.1 This report is intended to provide Members with updated information on major partnerships previously reported to the Audit Committee. The partnerships are:-

- Castle Point & Rochford Domestic Violence Panel (DVP) originally reported 25 September 2007.
- Groundwork Trust South Essex (GTSE) originally reported 30 September 2008.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Following a request from the Audit Committee further information regarding these partnerships is provided. In the case of the DVP the original report identified some weaknesses within the governance arrangements of the partnerships and a follow-up was requested to be undertaken looking at how the partnership was addressing these.

2.2 The GTSE report lacked detail around the work plan of the partnership and how far the Rochford area had benefitted from membership of the partnership and a report was requested to clarify these matters. Both reports are attached at appendix 1.

3 OUTCOME

3.1 The DVP was found to have given consideration to the original report and addressed the issues raised. Improvements were seen in financial control and review and follow-up of actions. In addition, the partnership was found to be undertaking review work to ensure it continued to deliver value for money.

3.2 GTSE was found to have spent £72,300 on projects within the Rochford District since the implementation of the partnership. The Council's contribution in this time is £20,000. A number of projects were found to have been undertaken since the original review was completed. A full list of the projects is included within the body of the report in appendix 1.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Partnership working is becoming an increasingly important way for local authorities to work. It is therefore important that the Council has a risk management process that specifically considers the risks associated with significant partnerships and obtains assurance about the management of those risks.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 One of the partnerships under review has been set up to tackle crime and disorder issues and plays an important part in encouraging community involvement.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Partnership working will become an increasingly important part of the assessment of the Council's Use of Resources.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council needs to ensure that there are sound governance arrangements in place for significant partnerships so that issues of liability are addressed and managed.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
That the findings of the reviews be endorsed.

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Background Papers:-

Partnership Reviews

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Appendix 1**Partnership Report - Castle Point and Rochford Domestic Violence Panel****Introduction**

A review of the above partnership was reported to this Committee on 25 September 2007. Overall, the review was positive about the Panel and the need for it to continue. The conclusion of the review did, however, list several areas of governance where the Panel was judged to be weak. These weaknesses included improving the quality of action plans, financial management and evaluations of projects.

It should be noted that since the review was carried out the Council's Member representative has changed to Cllr Mrs Lucas-Gill. Funding allocated to projects initiated by the Panel for 2008/09 is £7,000 for the Sanctuary Project, £1,000 for Careline and £5,000 to anti-bullying and domestic abuse workshops. All monies come from the Rochford Crime and Disorder Partnership funding from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF).

Update On Weaknesses Identified – Incorporating the Response from the Chair of the Domestic Violence Panel**Financial Management**

In line with the recommendations made by the Review, the Building Society account has two signatories to ensure control and continuity and a financial spreadsheet is now held by Basildon Women's Aid which links expenditure to the objectives in the Action Plan. In addition, the Chair of the DVP has proactively undertaken an internal review of the referral process for the Sanctuary Scheme due to the high costs of the scheme. This has resulted in amendments to the procedure intended to make it more cost-effective and a further internal review is currently underway to ensure both the Sanctuary and Careline schemes continue to give value for money. This review is intended to be complete by the end of 2008.

Action Plan

The Chair reports that a new Action Plan was implemented as of May 2008. It is intended to run until 2011. The progress column is still intended only to be used when progress is made; this is, however, mitigated by the fact that notes of meetings do include an action column and all Panel members are clear regarding responsibility for tasks allocated. Minuted actions are followed up at subsequent meetings. In addition, work is currently being undertaken by the Panel to better align the Action Plan with delivery of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets and make it a more outcome driven document.

Review of Use

As part of the review of the referral process mentioned above of both the Sanctuary Scheme and Careline, more rigorous follow up arrangements are being put in place to enable proper evaluation of both schemes. Again, this review is intended to be complete by the end of 2008.

Termination Agreement

There was felt to be little value in a formal termination agreement due to the nature of the Panel. Firstly, the setup is fairly informal and groups that no longer wish to be involved are welcome to leave at any time. Secondly, the Panel is open to any groups with an interest in combating domestic violence to join and it was felt that a formal agreement may deter some from joining who may be able to bring ideas to the group.

Conclusion

The DVP has made good progress in addressing the governance concerns raised in the original report and improvements have been made in this area. In addition, the internal reviews being carried out by the Panel in respect of governance and value for money arrangements demonstrate a clear commitment to continuing work within these areas.

Partnership Report – Groundwork Trust South Essex (GTSE)

Introduction

Following an initial report to this Committee on 30 September 2008 a request was made that further information be provided regarding the aims, objectives and projects undertaken within the Rochford District. This report provides Members with details relating to these projects, together with the funding given to each project. It should be noted that the original review was undertaken in February 2008 and this update includes projects initiated since that time.

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of GTSE is to create a society made up of sustainable communities that are vibrant, healthy and safe, which respect the local and global environment and where individuals and enterprise prosper. In practice this involves delivering programmes of work under three priorities.

- People – creating opportunities for people to learn new skills and to become more active citizens.
- Places – delivering environmental improvements that create cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods.
- Prosperity – helping businesses and individuals to fulfill their potential.

Projects in Rochford District

GTSE has so far received £20,000 in funding from the Council. A further £10,000 per annum contribution is fixed for the next three years, in line with a signed Sponsor's Agreement. GTSE has undertaken projects to the value of £72,300 within the District. Below is a list of all projects undertaken in Rochford District since the start of GTSE in 2006, together with a breakdown of where the money has been spent.

1. Barling Magna Millennium Park Management Plan. Cost £4,800

GTSE were asked by Barling Magna Parish Council to draw up a capital and revenue plan to enable the Parish Council to open the site to the public. A comprehensive report was produced which included consultation with the Parish Council, which enabled this important local green space to open to the public in June 2008. Underway 2007/08, completed 2008/09.

2. Doggetts Park. Cost £2,000

GTSE's Greengrid Task Force regularly carries out works at Doggetts Park in Rochford. The Greengrid Taskforce are local volunteers who, with Groundwork supervision, are laying paths, clearing weeds and scrub and managing hedges and ponds. Underway 2007/08, ongoing.

3. Essex Roots. Cost £22,000, Value for Rochford District £11,000

An innovative Heritage Project which was focused on young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or young people in danger of becoming NEET. Twenty young people were allocated places on a film-making project, ten from Grays and ten from Rochford.

The Rochford group were selected from King Edmund School and they had 10 sessions with trained Youth Workers and a media company, Pixelworks. The young people researched the history, worked the script, took part in a story boarding workshop, went on a film-shoot, took part in a presentation workshop and finally presented their film at a première attended by 100 people at the Thameside Theatre, Grays. The DVD is available from GTSE. Underway 2007/08, completed 2007/08.

4. Wyburn Primary School: A Grow Global school. Cost £4,500

Wyburn School is one of this year's Grow Global Schools. A group of children will soon begin to select a growing area within the school grounds and 15 sessions of extra curricular lessons will be provided by the Groundwork Education Officer. The project will focus on basic biology, growing techniques, different foods, nutrition lessons, global issues, the water cycle, harvesting, etc. Underway 2008/09, ongoing.

5. Corporate Volunteering with Eon. Cost £3,000

GTSE are providing Team Challenge days for employees of Eon based in Rayleigh. Teams of workers are provided with training and an understanding of the environmental issues related to a Team Challenge Day. Activities have included coppicing, scrub clearance, litter picking, etc. Underway 2008/09, completed 2008/09.

6. Pathways to Employment. Cost £180,000, Value for Rochford District £36,000

GTSE has established a team to focus on utilising volunteering as a step towards employment. The scheme seeks to match good volunteer host employers with, in year 1, NEET young people. In year 2 and 3 the focus will be disabled and ethnic minorities. The project works across South Essex but we are working closely with Rochford Partners, in particular Connexions and Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association of Voluntary Services. Underway 2008/09, ongoing.

7. Connect South Essex. Cost £55,000, Value for Rochford District £11,000

A project aims at connecting charities in Rochford and other Thames Gateway South Essex districts with corporate partners. The project has only just begun, but the indicators are that local charities should benefit enormously from a wide variety of real gifts and gifts in kind. Underway 2008/09, ongoing.

Future Works

To date the Business Plan for 2009/10 has not been finalised and as such it is difficult to give a definitive statement regarding future projects planned for Rochford District. However, the Head of Community Services will be fully involved in the development of the Business Plan and will ensure that Rochford continues to gain value from its involvement in GTSE.

Conclusion

Projects within the Rochford District have increased during 2008/09 as GTSE improves its capacity to deliver such projects, as detailed above. This increased capacity to work toward the Council's corporate objectives is seen as a major benefit and thus there would appear to be good reason for the Council's involvement in GTSE to continue.