

Area West Committee – 20th July 2011

7. SSSC Partnerships (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to alert the Area West Committee to the findings of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, which was charged with reviewing all SSSC partnerships, and to consider any implications relevant to Area West, of the recommendations arising from this review.

Public Interest

SSDC works in partnership with a range of organisations, to co-ordinate activity, deliver services and, where possible, work more efficiently to tackle issues, which are relevant to more than one organisation. We maintain a Partnerships Register, which records information about each partnership and ensures they are regularly reviewed. In 2010, the Scrutiny Committee was asked to take a more detailed look at each partnership, with the aim of coming up with proposals to rationalise the number of partnerships, and improve governance and other arrangements for those remaining on the register.

Recommendations

- (1) that Area West Committee recommend to District Executive that :
 - (a) Crewkerne Aqua Centre be removed from the SSSC partnership register;
 - (b) the Stop Line Way Steering Group and the Blackdown Hills Partnership remain on the partnership register;
 - (c) the Chard Regeneration Scheme remains on the Partnership Register, and that the next report to Area West on the Chard Regeneration Scheme includes details of future governance arrangements;
- (2) that other relevant recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee are considered in future reports as indicated in the Area Committee's forward plan.

Background

The original drivers for this review came from the Audit Commission, who set a requirement that SSSC maintained a Partnerships Register and regularly reviewed the governance arrangements for each partnership. In addition, SSSC's own Corporate Plan commits us to reviewing all partnerships to ensure they are effective and fit for purpose.

In June 2010, Scrutiny Committee established a Task & Finish Group to examine all 37 partnerships on the SSSC Partnerships Register. It agreed a template, which included details on each partnership including costs, officer time, outcomes achieved, governance arrangements etc. Managers responsible for each partnership completed the template and presented the facts to the Task & Finish Group. All 37 partnerships on the register were assessed over the course of 6 meetings and the conclusions were presented to and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee in March 2011.

The Scrutiny recommendations were then considered by District Executive in April 2011. The District Executive agreed that any 'area' implications of the report should be considered by the relevant Area Committee in July, before any further consideration by District Executive.

This report therefore focuses on the partnerships relevant to Area West and the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee regarding these partnerships.

Review Findings

The full report as approved by the Scrutiny Committee, including assessment of each partnership, was presented to District Executive in April 2011.

Based on data presented by each of the managers, the review established that:

SSDC directly contributes approximately £4.3m per year to partnerships and the total number of officer and member hours spent on attending partnership meetings and their associated sub groups are approximately 4,700 hours per year.

The Scrutiny Committee recommended that the following definition of a partnership should be adopted at SSDC:

A partnership is a formal working arrangement involving one or more independent bodies, from any sector, who pool resources and share responsibility for agreeing and then delivering a set of planned actions and outcomes. A formal agreement is made by all partners to work together for specific outcomes.

Taken all together the recommendations of the review will help the Council to simplify the Partnership Register and test the soundness of the overall partnership arrangements. These recommendations need to be looked at in more detail on a partnership-by-partnership basis by the relevant Area Committee and Lead Officer and consideration given to how any proposed changes can be implemented.

Since the review was commissioned, however, the wider environments in which we and our partnerships operate, have changed considerably:

- many quangos and sub regional structures have been or are being dismantled;
- new sub regional partnerships are being formed, most notable are the private sector led Local Enterprise Partnership and the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Partnership;
- there is less prescription around partnership arrangements and the cross agency targets required;
- funding that went with these requirements has been removed, un-ringfenced or substantially cut (e.g. the scrapping of the LAA)
- Virtually all public sector bodies have been asked to cut their budgets at levels unprecedented in modern times

Overall the partnerships landscape has changed significantly, in a very short time and is still not fully in place, as the coalition government continues to shift the focus away from top down structures. It is also placing stronger emphasis on local community groups taking action to tackle issues in their own communities.

Area West – Partnerships Reviewed

Table 1 outlines the 4 partnerships reviewed by the Scrutiny Task & Finish Group and their detailed recommendations. The potential implications, if Area West Committee agrees with the Scrutiny recommendations, are outlined below:

- **The Stop Line Way** – Scrutiny Committee recommend that
 - the Stop Line Way be retained on the Partnerships Register until the project is deemed to be complete.
 - the term complete is understood to mean completed within South Somerset.
 - the Terms of Reference be updated as a matter of urgency.
 - the liabilities for SSDC regarding future maintenance of the Stop Line Way be clarified by August 2011 and reported to Area West Committee.

A report on the progress of the Stop Line Way project that will address all these issues will be prepared shortly and an item is in the committee's forward plan.

- **Blackdown Hills (AONB) Partnership** – The Scrutiny Committee recommend that
 - this partnership remains on the register
 - annual update reports are made to Area West Committee as appropriate
 - Blackdown Hills AONB and Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB should be funded consistently - from Area West and East Committees.

Note: Financial contributions to Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB are currently made from the Countryside Budget

- **Chard Regeneration Scheme (Chard Vision)** – the Scrutiny Committee concluded that this scheme was core work of SSDC (Core Strategy and regeneration) as it could be considered to be regeneration work for Area West and therefore is not a partnership and should be removed from the register. However, a report to the Area West Committee in March 2011 on the governance arrangements reaffirmed that the Chard Regeneration Scheme will be delivered by a partnership led by SSDC and so ought to remain on the register. The next report to Area West on the Chard Regeneration Scheme will include details of future governance arrangements.
- **Crewkerne Aqua Centre** – Scrutiny Committee concluded that Crewkerne Aqua Centre is an independent body with whom SSDC has a loan agreement (monitored by District Executive). It should therefore be removed from the Partnerships Register.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Corporate Priority Implications:-

Theme 5 – Deliver well managed cost effective services valued by our customers
 5.4 Deliver additional savings through partnership working within and without South Somerset - 0.5% each year.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None.

Background Papers: *Scrutiny Agendas & Minutes June 2010*
 Scrutiny Agendas & Minutes March 2011
 Detailed submissions from managers and notes of each Task & Finish
 Review group meeting, Sept 2010 – Feb 2011
 District Executive Agenda & Minutes April 2011