

SWINDON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE 28TH JUNE 2007 - WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

On the day of the conference in June we ran two different workshops. They were on Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Management. Below is the feedback from those workshops:

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

We asked the delegates the following questions:

1. **What would you say are the main barriers that might prevent the sustainable Community Strategy being widely adopted by the Voluntary and Community sector/Private Sector/Public Sector from December 2007 onwards?**
2. **How can we all work together to overcome those barriers?**
3. **Take forward 3 key actions that could be taken to promote the importance of the final version of the Sustainable Community Strategy**

A. 1 Barriers from all of the three sectors included:

- Clarity of ownership of Community Strategy
- Top down approach – needs to be adopted by Directors/Chief Execs and fed down.
- Definition of “Community” needs to be agreed
- Initiative Fatigue – another good idea that we all have to look at !
- Volunteers bogged down in day-to-day tasks
- Lack of engagement which leads to lack of buy-in by all parties
- Language barriers – plain English
- Lack of role models to move the strategy forward
- Lack of information / communication access point
- Because of the diversity of Voluntary & Community Sector – it would be very difficult to get to everyone
- Some community partners/stakeholders don't believe that views are taken into account and feel that no action will be taken or amendments made.
- Lack of resolve and capacity – finance/people
- Confusing for public sector staff e.g. should I be looking to the LAA, the Community Strategy, the Economic Strategy
- Integration – How are public sector staff going to integrate “shaping” new policy coming from the Community Strategy with things already happening that the Public Sector may or may not be involved in
- Instability of environment for Public Sector
 - Continual restructuring
 - Shifting sands of public sector policies
 - Political changes which affect policy
- How does it effect the bottom line in public sector

- CSR agenda – often volunteering is part of CSR, so could link “Neighbourhood Strategy” via volunteers
- Recognising value of other public sector organisations
- Commissioning services - supporting grass roots “full cost recovery”
- Increasing involvement of all the community based organisations
- Less inward looking in each organisation (concern over resources time people)
- Potential Barrier: What’s in it for me? (Organisation) locality
- Unfamiliarity with the new culture / new way of doing things
- Lack of Awareness of the strategy
- Small Companies – ‘fall below the radar’ and have limited resources, budgets and staff

A2. How can we work together to overcome the barriers:

- Lets have a shared mission statement
- Encourage organisations to reflect on how to involve themselves in strategy
- Encourage a stable facilitative culture
- Make people responsible for targets (ie: Councillors/Community Champions/named people/role models
- Sell benefits to all staff/stakeholders/partners
- Use relevant language and Face to Face Contact
- Develop marketing plan and engagement plan
- Use successful case studies to model new cultural behaviour
- Lack of corporate logos/identities
- Effective Communication / Marketing Plan about the benefits
- Institutions –changes in the way they work
 - Partnership working
 - Perceived benefits
 - Yield immediate benefits
 - Supportive of organisations roles and what they are trying to deliver
- Identify ‘Blocks’ / Gaps and then remove them
- Clearly identify specific roles for business to help deliver vision
- Identify why business should get involved
- Clarify timescales, results, action points
- Allow flexibility – ability of business to advance own agendas
- Make sure language used is relevant to all

A3 What actions could be taken to promote the importance of the final version of the Community Strategy

- Communication - Publicise Positive Outcomes - Sell the benefits
- Use the Town Crest – or involve community to redesign a crest
- Make sure pictures are “real” and reflect diversity of community
- Use ‘Plain English’ model and jargon buster
- Offer support / accommodation / resource / access points / clear information
- Allow people enough time to ‘engage’

NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

We asked delegates to consider the issues raised in the neighbourhood management presentation and to identify four or five key points to feed back to the wider conference

Key questions we asked the delegates to discuss:

1. How do you think we can ensure that citizens are effectively involved in this process?
2. What do agencies need to learn or change to make this happen?
3. Can you think of other challenges we've not identified?
4. What else do you think we need to bear in mind?

A1. How do you think we can ensure that citizens are effectively involved in this process?

- Identify assets
- Include Youth engage them:
 - On-line
 - Using blogs
- Give citizens an opportunity to release frustrations / understand issues and give them an understanding of way things are - Guard against 'loudest voices' and focus on individuals
- We need to listen to what our citizens have to say
- Compromise is order of the day – manage expectations
- Show citizens how and when things are delivered
- What will role for people be? Need to be specific to get engagement - What do you expect people to do?
- Statutory agencies need to be prepared to be responsive to citizens and have the necessary skills to do so
- Keep it Simple – make it easy for people to engage
- People need to see they have made a difference
- Agencies to report back
- Neighbourhood learning – all sides to learn together including statutory agencies
- Community engagement team

A2. What do agencies need to learn or change to make this happen?

- Estimate size of community – but lets not agonise over this
- What is a community ?
 - policing areas
 - Children Centres
 - Parishes
 - GP areas
 - Electoral Ward
 - Village fete
 - School gate
- Encourage people who want to have a say

- Need an enjoyment factor – not just for paid people
- Engage communities of interest ie: Religious / faith groups
 - Young people, Cultural Groups, Hard to reach groups
- Be trustworthy & reliable i.e. if can't do something come back and say so
- Ensure good knowledge exchange when someone leaves and new person comes
- Ensure seamless discussion and communication amongst agencies
- Statutory agencies need to work together not pass people around – use a multi-agency approach
- Equality – don't talk down to people – use tact and diplomacy
- Ensure people feel their views are valid
- Working with community takes time
- Work to engage all people, take time to get people involved – use different 'Hooks' for different people

A3. Can you think of other challenges we've not identified?

- Use of consultative groups
- Not all agencies have a neighbourhood focus
- Natural neighbourhoods don't equal wards so ward councillors a challenge
- Rural dimension – smaller communities – how to reach
- How do parish councils fit in?

A4. What else do you think we need to bear in mind?

- Raise awareness about what is out there
- Issues of understanding – clarification is needed over the basic concept
- Agencies need to learn to let go
- Communication done by not to groups
- Proper representation not just the usual suspects !
- Using current networks and resources
- Trust and communication
- Build and use what we've got
 - – networks
 - – engagement
- Concept of neighbourhood management – complex - find out what we people would want
- Small gains – changes will take time