

Agenda Item No: 7

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 2nd April 2013

Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working:
Management Response

Report By: Neil Dart
Director of Corporate Resources

Purpose of Report

To detail the management response to the recommendations made by the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working

Recommendation(s)

1. That Cabinet thank the Scrutiny Review Team for their report.
2. That Cabinet approve the Management Response

Reasons for Recommendations

To acknowledge the work of the Scrutiny Review Team and the proposals to enhance local Partnership working.

Introduction

1. A Scrutiny Review on partnership working was included in the 2012/13 Overview and Scrutiny annual work programme. The review began in September 2012, concluded in January 2013 and fell within the remit of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. The focus for this review developed from Member's interests in how best to improve understanding of local partnership working and hold local partnerships to account in the context of a particularly challenging financial climate.
3. The review team rightly acknowledge the wide variety of partnerships in which HBC is involved and considers how best to understand and scrutinise partnerships working in the public interest.
4. The Quality Bus and SeaChange partnerships were the chosen focus for this review and evidence was sought from key representatives from each of these partnerships.
5. The review objectives, membership and methodology, key findings and conclusions are clearly detailed in the review report attached.
6. Methods used in this review are considered further in this management response as the take up of these methods form part of the review recommendations addressed below.

Scrutiny Review Recommendations

7. Nine review recommendations are made, four on the Quality Bus Partnership (QBP), three on SeaChange and two more general recommendations (see page 8 of the review team report). The bulk of these are supported and each is considered in turn:

Quality Bus Partnership

8. The first recommendation encourages Members to contact the Stagecoach Director with views and ideas on improving bus services. This is entirely supported and subject to Cabinet approval, the contact details for the Stagecoach Director will be re-circulated in the next appropriate Members Bulletin.
9. The second recommendation encourages the appropriate involvement of Stagecoach and the QBP in the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road with a view to ensuring best possible bus routes and enhancing employment and regeneration opportunities for the town. This recommendation is supported.
10. This recommendation also requests that this management response advise on how best to progress QBP involvement.
11. It is the view of HBC officers involved with the QBP that partnership members are already part of appropriate Link Road discussions and that the core membership of

the partnership enables this involvement (particularly East Sussex County Council as the Highways authority).

12. It is also noted that in the evidence gathering sessions with the QBP in the review report, QBP colleagues are considering widening membership to involve Rother District Council. This is also welcomed and makes sense given our shared cultural and economic aspirations.
13. The third recommendation requests that the notes of the QBP and Bus Users Group be circulated to Scrutiny Members by e mail. Traditionally HBC have undertaken the secretarial role for the partnership but it is anticipated that East Sussex County Council will need to do so in the future. These arrangements are currently the subject of discussion between senior officers from the Borough and County Councils.
14. This response notes the review team's acknowledgement (paragraphs 2 and 3) of a challenging financial climate and reducing officer capacity. It is therefore suggested that the notes from the QBP and Bus Users Groups be forwarded by Councillor Scott (the Borough representative on the QBP) to Scrutiny Members and associated concerns be raised with Councillor Scott or Maynard (the County representative on the QBP) in the first instance.
15. HBC Corporate and Democratic Services officers can circulate these notes on behalf of Councillor Scott and/or Maynard, once received and as required.
16. It is advised that permission is sought from the QBP and the Bus Users Group before these notes are circulated to Scrutiny Members. Subject to permissions being sought and notes circulated as suggested, the recommendation is supported as this will help keep Scrutiny Members up to speed on bus related issues.
17. The fourth recommendation for Councillors Webb and Pragnell to meet with Stagecoach to discuss plans for a Community Transport Scheme is supported. Furthermore it is hoped that these Councillors can provide feedback at the next appropriate Resources Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting.

SeaChange Partnership

18. The fifth recommendation to receive an annual briefing from the Chief Executive of SeaChange to be referred to the Members' Training and Development Group and made part of the annual Programme of Member training is supported.
19. The sixth recommendation requests that the Council's representative on the SeaChange Board (currently Councillor Chowney) following discussion with the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs on appropriate performance measures request a retrospective annual performance report from SeaChange, and that this be made available to all Members, and potentially considered as part of the annual briefing mentioned in the previous recommendation.
20. This management response agrees with the scrutiny review team in the acknowledgement of the commercially sensitive nature of SeaChange activity and the difficulties this poses in terms of publishing performance information (paragraph 50).

21. Given that such information can only be published retrospectively it is suggested that the performance report proposed is put on hold and revisited if appropriate after the first annual briefing by the SeaChange Chief Executive.
22. If there is sufficient planning and a clear steer is given to the SeaChange Chief Executive in advance of his annual briefing, then this briefing can be tailored to meet Members needs and override the need for a separate performance report.
23. It is further suggested that after the annual briefing has taken place, the SeaChange Board Council representative (currently Councillor Chowney) and the Scrutiny Chairs are invited back to the appropriate meeting of the Members' Training and Development Group to review the evaluation feedback and check the briefing met Members' requirements.
24. The seventh recommendation requests an update on the activities of SeaChange's education partners on the various initiatives to enable local people from particularly deprived wards to become work ready.
25. This recommendation is welcomed but it is suggested that this update wait until the conclusion of the University Town Scrutiny review, given that the University is a key education partner of SeaChange and the learning from this review will help tailor the focus for further updates.
26. It is proposed that the update requested is refined by Scrutiny Members in the light of the conclusions of the University Town Scrutiny review at the joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting on the 13th of June.

General

27. The eighth recommendation encourages the use of the methods employed for this partnerships review to be applied to other areas of Council work. In particular that the audit and governance questions used to gather evidence as part of the partnerships review are used to help improve transparency and accountability of other areas of Council activity. The recommendation refers to three specific areas of Council activity and each is supported.
28. The first area concerns summarising and publishing the audit and governance arrangements for the Council's two largest partnerships Contracts Waste and Grounds Maintenance. The second requests the same of the LSP thematic partnerships and the third, encourages use of these methods by Overview and Scrutiny Committees for future work.
29. Subject to Cabinet agreement, the first area will be undertaken by officers within the Environmental Services Directorate and the latter two by officers from the Corporate Resources Directorate.
30. The final recommendation requests that the management response detail a suitable timeframe and set out the Lead Member or Officer responsible for progressing each recommendation. This has been supported where possible through the discussions of each recommendation above.

Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Yes
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Yes
Risk Management	Yes
Environmental Issues	Yes
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	Yes
Organisational Consequences	Yes
Local People's Views	Yes

Background Information

Partnerships Review Report
External scrutiny: the voice in the crowded room - Centre for Public Scrutiny 2005 report (<http://bit.ly/WSKNP0>).

Officer to Contact

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