

Responding to the economic downturn – the role and potential of partnerships

Outbreak paper from 18th September 2009 held at Southampton City Council, Civic Centre, Southampton

Introduction:

The changed economic landscape means that more than ever we need to make the most of the resources we have available, both to minimise the impact of the downturn, and to make sure we are ready to take advantage of any recovery. Stakeholders have been considering these issues in their local areas, often using the Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP's) as a forum for debate. 'Responding to the economic downturn - the role and potential of partnerships' brought people working within partnerships together who are considering the impact of the downturn and are finding ways of working to respond to it. The Southampton based event considered the use of sharing economic data and information, helped to understand the impact of the economic downturn and mitigate its impact on local areas. Discussions took place in order to help position local areas in order to benefit from the economic recovery and group work allowed us to review the LSP's Sustainable Community Strategy and to refocus priorities to reflect the new economic situation.

The event began with a welcome and introduction from Brad Roynon, Southampton City Council's Chief Executive. Brad began with some scene setting of what Southampton is experiencing at the present time and introduced the first of the day's speaker, Phil Swann from Shared Intelligence.

Panel of presentations exploring different perspective:

Phil Swann from Shared Intelligence has 30 years experience of working with local and central government. His presentation titled; 'Total Place - a whole area approach to integrating public services', explored individual budgets and the impact this will have on the care and support people receive in communities, and the willingness of local authorities to improve availability of their facilities.

Simon Newell, Head of Partnerships and External Relations at Brighton and Hove City Council, gave a presentation titled; 'A partnership perspective - how area partnerships can support economic recovery.' Simon discussed unemployment and the impact of Government policies in Brighton, partnership views on reducing waste and that ultimately there is a need for improved understanding and trust to realise the full value of partnerships.

The third presentation was given by Kishor Tailor, the Economic Director at PUSH (Partnership for Urban South Hampshire) on the 'Impact of the economic downturn on the South East - responding to the downturn'. He described PUSH and the external recognition it has received, the challenges faced by South Hampshire and the potential impact of PUSH, its growth strategy and economic development priorities, particularly in the light of the impact of the recession on employment, skills and site development.



The support programme for Local Strategic Partnerships in the south east

The fourth and final presentation from the morning session came from Lee Heley of the Audit Commission. He discussed the recent Audit Commission report 'When it comes to the Crunch... Economic waves and the need for local responses to the recession'. It is the second in a series of Audit Commission reports looking at how local authorities are responding to the 2008/09 recession. The report finds that local and national government have made a positive initial response to the recession, but it warns that councils should prepare for worsening social impact as unemployment rises.

Q and A session with the panel:

Questions directed to Phil Swann from Si (shared Intelligence)

Q: How are you responding to changes and the impact of prevention and how does this show? – Barbara O'Sullivan, Community first Portsmouth

A: All issues are identified in the model. When talking about long term projects in relation to children and younger people the reality is that there will be less money. If the preventative agenda is right the issue will be how it will be introduced.

Q: Individualisation budgets; how will this affect their own care and support? – Fiona McMurray, Southampton City Council

A: 75% of the money is spent by older people and families not the state. We think they will not get effective use or value as the local authorities can not manage this.

Q: Is there any funding for councils? – Fiona McMurray, Southampton City Council

A: They are getting extra time to improve their partnerships.

Q: Is there a willingness to broaden out the use of facilities? – Caroline Gosford, Arun District Council

A: Dorset submitted out a pilot, reifications are still rebounding around the place. Each organisation has held invoiced perceptions about the others. As a result all of this stuff is going round the system. The Themes Valley Partnership addresses cultural issues and was forced to reflect on what they have learnt. There are bound to be cultural differences but there seems to be a culture of giving feedback outside the local areas.

Q: Trying to implement skills agenda at level two/three is a nightmare we need to get partnerships working together. – Richard Byard, Reading UK CIC

A: In the area interim report it said that it does make work more complex and richer. Participants are encouraged to identify areas and sources for collaboration. The Government is now becoming more helpful on continuing exercises.

Questions directed to Simon Newell from Brighton and Hove City Council

Q: In relation to supporting education and learning partnership, when the recession hit I was asked to attend a conference. The aim was to explain what councils should be doing. What I did instead was to attend a partnership conference for two tier LSP's. The Jobcentre Plus has been a key partnership in this as they have had volunteering projects on. The issue was how the lower tier LSP's were responding to the recession and what they are doing. They are

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