

REPORT TO SSP BOARD

PAPER B

Introduction

The context in which partners and the SSP are working continues to change rapidly and so even with just a two-month gap between SSP Board meetings, a lot has changed. This report updates board members on key areas of activity and other considerations as we move towards the away day in November.

1. Communications

SSP Board members have recommended a focus on improving communication about what was going on and coming up across the SSP. At the end of April, the first trial of a Transforming Suffolk E-newsletter was circulated. In association with the partnership team at Suffolk County Council and pan-Suffolk Communication Officers Group, articles and key messages will be gathered proactively to produce what is hoped to be a useful bi-monthly e-newsletter as part of improving communications. Jenny Wilson will act as the coordinating lead.

2. Performance

As you are aware, the Performance Management Group (PMG) has asked each of the nine Delivery Partnerships to put forward a proposal for how they would spend a proportion of the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) funding. PMG were due to consider the proposal at their meeting on the 6th June, but this discussion has been postponed until the meeting on the 9th July. Once the PMG has considered the proposals they will make recommendations on which projects should receive funding. The SSP Board will then be asked to agree the PMGs recommendations.

The SSP Board will not be meeting for some time after the PMG meeting and in order to allow projects to get up a running as soon as possible it is suggested that the PMG recommendations are posted on the Transforming Suffolk website for Board members to view. Members will then be given a set timeframe in which to agree on the recommendations put forward.

The PMG have now undertaken three performance clinics focused on the Economy, Skills and Education. At their next meeting, the Performance Management Group will be reviewing how effective the performance clinics have been. The next meeting of the PMG will also be receiving the Q4 performance report against LAA targets, providing an opportune time to consider performance across the partnerships and identify areas for further discussion in the future. This may also provide a useful feed into the SSP Board's away day.

3. Developing the Board's Business

Should the SSP Board develop a small executive group? This question was raised at the April meeting and the board requested options to be worked up about how a small executive group could help provide more capacity to steer the SSP board's business.

A number of board members shared their perspectives in preparing this paper. The audit commission has also produced guidance for strategic partnerships in the past few weeks. The guidance suggests that the SSP is broadly in line with recommendations for having a focused group on performance management and the majority of capacity directed towards delivery groups. The SSP also has a level for strategic developments including the SSP Board and other initiatives including the Lives we Lead, Leaders we Need programme.

However, the SSP's structure is still young and because of the rapidly developing context it cannot be too rigid. Some of what influences the SSP and partners was predictable and so initiatives including the Lives we Lead, Leaders we Need programme were developed to create capacity and build relationships across the SSP and wider communities. This is started to achieve that aim and change the way partners work with each other.

Recommendations are emerging about what will work for Suffolk based on this learning. SSP partners can expect further changes. A small executive group would realistically, only influence the actual business of the SSP board and certainly not the whole SSP network. The board is asked to consider the following updates, which may also influence the design of a small executive group and which should be discussed as part of the away day.

2a. Participatory Budgeting

This is a process about involving local people and communities in the decision-making about spending public money. Suffolk is a pilot for this approach and Norfolk has forged a lead in this region. All bodies spending public money, including local authorities, the SSP and Local Strategic Partnerships are being encouraged by central government to move towards participatory budgeting as part of a more effective relationship with communities and enabling people to influence the decisions affecting them. This provides an opportunity for the SSP to lead in Suffolk, perhaps earmarking some of its PRG allocation to be decided with the public and influencing local strategic partnerships to do the same. Proposals and options being developed and will be shared with the SSP board this summer, based on learning from Norfolk. We have the opportunity to go further!

2b. Lives we Lead, Leaders we Need

As this programme reaches its zenith there are many strands beginning to overlap and interlink with the SSP and other programmes and partnership activity. There are recommendations about structures, roles, responsibilities and opportunities, all based on the learning and interaction between leaders and communities. The board and programme partners may need to organise a joint event to share this learning and help inform the away day. The Leadership Centre for Local Government is still available to assist at this stage and something dedicated is more favourable than squeezing such important considerations onto a meeting agenda.

2c. Comprehensive Area Assessment

Evidence gathering is now underway as part of the CAA which is an Audit Commission assessment of how the whole county is working together. Edwina Child, the Audit Commissions CAA lead for Suffolk, is meeting with partnerships, organisations and

individuals across Suffolk. She will be attending the PMG on the 9th July to update on progress to date and a self-assessment is being prepared for Suffolk with all partners contributing. The focus for this self-assessment is the achievement of the outcomes in 'Transforming Suffolk' and it is intended that this will be available for the SSP Board Away Day in November as a context paper. The Audit Commission will also be reporting their first annual CAA Assessment in November.

Conclusions

The SSP board asked; what would a small executive group do and what would it look like.

The Performance Management Group meets regularly to highlight what is working, and what needs to change. This enables the SSP to deliver its community strategy and LAA. An SSP Board executive group can therefore focus on how the SSP Board delivers its strategic leadership role and manages its business. However it is very likely that the recommendations of the Lives we Lead Programme and other contextual pressures may suggest a more radical rethinking of the SSP structure.

These points and further considerations about local government review and wider challenges will inform the away day and only with all of this in mind is it recommended that the SSP Board should consider changing its approach.

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