

## Issues Analysis meeting minutes

Issues analysis meeting minutes	
Client	Conwy County Borough Council
Project	Partnership working
Date	20.07.09
Attendance	<p>Fran Lewis – Conwy CBC            Mike Halstead – Conwy CBC            Keith Williams – Conwy CBC            Helen Gregson Homes – CYPP partnership            Barry Jones Vice Chair of Community Safety Partnership            David Scott, Chair of LSB            Paul Williams, Chair of Rural Partnership            Cllr Stuart Anderson, Chair Of Partnership Scrutiny Committee            John Roberts – Wales Audit Office            Mike Palmer – Wales Audit Office</p>
Situation	<p>Conwy County Borough Council (the Council) contributes to a wide variety of statutory and non-statutory partnerships. These include national and regional groups and locally-based partnerships focused on geographical areas or specific themes, interests or concerns. Increasingly, working in partnership is seen as a key approach to delivering real improvements to local communities.</p> <p>The Council's Internal Audit will be undertaking a substantial piece of work relating to partnership working. The Issues Analysis meeting will be used to inform both the internal and external (Wales Audit Office) audit work.</p> <p>The Council has recently taken the lead on behalf of the Local Service Board to draft a framework for the governance of partnerships which, if adopted, will be influential in how partnerships in Conwy work in future.</p> <p>Results Based Accountability is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that has been successfully used to improve local communities. It focuses on securing improvements in the wellbeing of local populations and communities, and working with partners is a fundamental part of its approach.</p>
Complication	<p>Over recent years the Council and its regulators have identified a number of weaknesses in its approach to partnership working. These have included a plethora of subgroups within each partnership and inconsistency in the way partnerships work and are resourced.</p> <p>A recent Wales Audit Office assessment of the Council's progress against recommendations made in relation to partnerships concluded that, the Council has embarked on an ambitious plan for joint working and delivery of services, but there is a need to ensure that delivery of outcomes is the focus of its partnership working.</p> <p>The issues analysis meeting discussed a number of issues. A number of these are summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mapping exercise identified 650 examples of partnership working in which the council was involved. These range from major statutory, strategic partnerships to informal collaboration.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ work has been ongoing to rationalise and reduce the number of 'partnerships'.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• voluntary sector is involved in 40 partnerships and is an active</li> </ul>

	<p>partner but fielding people to engage in a wide range of strategic discussions is an ongoing challenge (as opposed to discussing delivery issues).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• securing cross-agency buy-in is seen as a continuing challenge. The attempt to get key partners to 'own' an initiative to use 'Open Strategy' cited as an example.</li> <li>• examples of partnerships without resources</li> <li>• lack of forecasting and forward planning for the forthcoming community benefit funding from windfarms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ recent establishment of the Strategic Funding Board noted as a possible means of addressing the issue.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Environmental Partnership on hold as it appeared to be unable to clarify its purpose.</li> <li>• plethora of meetings and absence of a sense of purpose.</li> <li>• feedback and accountability - for instance partners pursuing their own agendas and examples of employees being unclear about their accountability.</li> <li>• relationship between the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group and the VS compact and the LSB unclear.</li> <li>• Community Safety Partnership cited as a good example of good practice following recent developments to improve the focus of the partnership.</li> <li>• North Wales Police continue to find aspects of partnership working frustrating. Police force have a clear approach for plan, action and review. Time taken to implement solutions often a cause of frustration and it is often unclear whether the delay is warranted</li> <li>• often a need to win hearts and minds and to get communities to take ownership. Improvements need to come from within communities as well as being top-down.</li> <li>• recognising and reconciling organisational cultural differences noted as key in order to build upon the strengths of individual partners and mitigate weaknesses.</li> <li>• strengths and weaknesses often change over time and dynamic and fluid nature of partnership working needs to be recognised.</li> <li>• partners work well together in Conwy based on a foundation of goodwill. The importance of outcome accountability is recognised by LSB. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ however, LSB unable to form a clear view on whether partnership working is making a significant impact on key issues facing the area.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Assembly Government performance measurement and monitoring requirements often focussed on process outputs (such as attendance).</li> <li>• Children and Young People's Partnership also an example of good practice. Core Aims Group seen as a model of good practice. Results Based Accountability used to strengthen focus on outcomes.</li> <li>• role of LSB needs to be clarified.</li> <li>• independent scrutiny of LSB is an issue and need to address issues of accountability.</li> </ul>
Objectives of the study/anticipated impact	Help to build the capacity of organisations in Conwy to focus on results that matter most to the people of the area, when working in partnership.
Main Question	Could the lives of people in Conwy be improved through partnership working that focuses more on results?

Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was agreed to use the Issues Analysis to inform the work of Conwy CBC's Internal Audit as well as WAO's external review.</li> <li>• Conwy CBC would undertake a baseline review of partnership working that would look at a sample of a range of partnership working – from informal collaboration to formal statutory partnerships.</li> <li>• WAO will provide external challenge to Conwy CBC's Internal Audit of partnership working (timing of challenge sessions to be agreed to maximise added value).</li> <li>• WAO will use output from Internal Audit partnership working review to inform and shape its work.</li> <li>• A meeting of key partners will be arranged for early December 2009 to discuss output from Conwy CBC Internal Audit work and shape WAO work.</li> <li>• WAO will design and deliver a series of workshops to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ provide Conwy partners with an opportunity to tackle a limited number of key issues arising from Internal Audit work; and</li> <li>○ build the capacity of Conwy partners to focus on results by applying the ideas of Results Based Accountability.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Proposed start date	Conwy CBC Internal Audit work September to November. WAO external challenge September/November WAO workshops – January/February
Anticipated end date	Completion by end of February
Products	Report/Workshops/Evaluation