

North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership - Executive

15 April 2010

York and North Yorkshire Rural Partnership -Supporting Stronger Communities) Review of Terms of Reference

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Y&NY Rural / Supporting Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership currently has 2 chief roles:-
- It is charged with acting as the Rural Partnership for the whole of the sub-region (including York) and feeding into the Regional Rural Partnership arrangements and
 - It “holds the ring” on stronger community issues (eg volunteering, affordable housing) on behalf of the NYSP.
- 1.2 The Partnership has carried out a review of its terms of reference and effectiveness as a partnership. This report explores the strengths and weaknesses of the current arrangements and proposes some changes to enable the Partnership to be re-focussed in order to add value to the NYSP and drive through delivery of the relevant objectives and targets.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The NY Sustainable Communities Strategy includes the following reference to the Rural Partnership:

The Rural Partnership provides an opportunity for member bodies to work together at a strategic level to plan services and programmes in relation to rural issues. The Partnership aims to establish a clear vision and voice for rural North Yorkshire and to match priority and need to delivery and funding.

The priorities for the Partnership are:

- *Affordable housing*
- *Access to services and opportunities*
- *Provision of cultural services*
- *Community capacity*
- *Environmental issues.*

These priorities are reflected in the North Yorkshire Local Area Agreement where this Partnership has taken a key role in development and service delivery of specific targets.

The Rural Partnership also assists in the delivery of the Regional Rural Framework priorities at a sub-regional level and links to the Regional Rural Board to ensure North Yorkshire’s priorities are represented in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

2.2 It is generally accepted that there is more to be done in North Yorkshire (including York) to provide the level of leadership required to adequately present the interests of such a rural area. Risk assessments, carried out by the Performance Team within NYCC, also suggest that due to the cross-cutting nature of much of its work, the Stronger Communities Thematic represents one of the NYSP's greater areas of risk and there is therefore a need to ensure that efforts are focussed in the right areas. The following section therefore seeks to set out the strengths and weaknesses of the current arrangements by reviewing each element of work which currently falls within the remit of the Partnership.

i) Rural Issues

There is a danger that the existence of a separate rural body marginalises rural issues, thereby exacerbating the challenges faced by rural communities (e.g. discussions about small schools are key to rural inclusion but take place within the Children & Young People's Thematic Partnership). This approach can apply equally to other Thematics and it is suggested that there is a need to more clearly define the role of any Rural Partnership and how it interfaces with other Thematics and partners.

ii) Waste

The LAA includes targets relating to municipal waste landfilled and amounts recycled / composted. There is already an active Member-led Waste Partnership with representatives from the District Councils, the County Council and the City of York Council. This body leads in approving the shared Waste Strategy which includes issues such as recycling / composting performance targets and monitoring; waste minimisation etc. Any efforts on the part of the Stronger Thematic Partnership are therefore likely to result in duplication and are less likely to be as informed as discussions at the Waste Partnership itself.

iii) Housing

The LAA targets include homelessness, affordable housing and housing supply. The role of the Rural Partnership at present is to monitor the LAA Housing targets. The delivery and accountability of these targets lie with the North Yorkshire Strategic Housing Board which is made up from an elected member from each district / borough council, the county council, City of York Council and the two national park authorities. A Government Office rep also sits on the board in a non-voting capacity. Each elected member has one vote. The Strategic Housing Board is already managing performance in terms of new affordable housing units and private sector housing interventions with a dedicated officer in place to support this. The Lead Officer on the Board has attended NYSP Executive meetings in the past. The role of the Stronger Partnership in Affordable Housing issues is therefore limited and potentially superfluous.

iv) Economy

The emerging Economy and Skills Board for York and North Yorkshire is set to build upon the previous sub-regional approach to the economy (via the Development Board and Partnership Executive). The economic and cultural priorities are therefore currently determined by the Development Board/Partnership Executive and The North Yorkshire Cultural Partnership respectively and any overview from Stronger Communities will therefore add little value. It is suggested that the Stronger Communities Partnership can, however,

seek to support and challenge the economic partnerships on community related matters to ensure there is a wider view.

v) **Environment**

The environmental elements of the LAA cover:-

- CO2 reductions from LA operations
- CO2 emissions in the LA area
- Flooding
- Conservation management
- Planning for adaptation to climate change

The Stronger Communities Partnership has considered whether there was merit in creating a separate Environment Thematic Partnership. On balance, it is the view of the Partnership that environmental issues shall be an important strand within the Stronger Communities Partnership but a new approach is required to give the agenda greater emphasis. Part of this new approach will involve challenging Local Strategic Partnerships and other Thematic Partnerships on their environmental credentials whilst seeking to pool best practice and expertise.

3.0 The Proposal

3.1 This section of the report suggests ways in which the current arrangements can be improved.

3.2 Stronger Partnership

There is a continued need to have a partnership which focuses on the delivery of elements of the NY Sustainable Communities Strategy and the LAA targets. It is proposed however, that its remit changes to enable it to be more effective in terms of

- focussing on key priorities
- strengthening partnership arrangements to deal with the priorities
- holding partners to account for the delivery of the priorities.

Revised Terms of Reference have been drafted which are included at Appendix 1. These propose that the partnership focus on the principal “stronger community” based issues of:-

1. Access
2. Transport
3. Third Sector and
4. Community Engagement and Cohesion *
5. Environment

* There is currently a Community Engagement and Neighbourhood Management Framework Implementation Group which is leading in this area at present and reporting directly to the NYSP Executive. It is not proposed that this arrangement changes but that, following implementation, responsibility passes to the Stronger Communities Partnership.

3.3 Rural Issues

The Stronger Communities/Rural Partnership believes that there is still a role for a separate “Rural Partnership. However, it believed that there is a need to change the focus of the Partnership and to work more closely with other Thematic Partnerships to ensure that rural issues are integral to the work of all partners. In order to achieve this, it is proposed that:-

- the Rural Partnership adopts more of a scrutiny function so that it challenges and supports other Thematic Partnerships and organisations on rural matters
- the business of the ‘Rural Partnership’ is separated from that of the ‘Stronger Communities Partnership’ but both areas are dealt with back to back
- the Rural Partnership acts as the principal rural advocate for the NYSP and develops an approach to “rural proofing”
- a smaller support team is created (perhaps as a virtual team) to support other Thematic Partnerships and organisations in assessing the extent to which rural issues are dealt with
- further discussions take place with the City Of York given the functional sub-region role of the Rural Partnership.

A revised Terms of Reference is attached at **Appendix 2**.

3.4 Waste

It is proposed that the York & North Yorkshire Waste Partnership are assigned formal responsibility for all strategic waste issues including delivery of the LAA targets on behalf of the NYSP. Officer access to the NYSP Executive should prove possible via Council Chief Executives should the need arise, and the Stronger Communities Partnership would remain available to the Waste Partnership should there be a need for any additional support.

3.5 Housing

It is proposed that the North Yorkshire Strategic Housing Board take full responsibility for the LAA targets including both delivery and performance management. Again, officer access to the NYSP Executive should prove possible via Council Chief Executives should the need arise, and the Stronger Communities Partnership would remain available to the Housing Board should there be a need for any additional support.

3.6 Economy

It is proposed that the York and North Yorkshire Economy and Skills Board for are assigned sole responsibility for the sub-regional approach to the economy (via the Development Board and Partnership Executive). The Rural Partnership/Stronger Communities Partnership can however, seek to support and challenge on rural and community related matters to ensure there is a wider view.

4.0 Recommendations

The NYSP Executive is asked to support the

- 4.1 proposal that responsibility for strategic waste issues, including delivery of the LAA targets relating to waste, be assigned to the York and North Yorkshire Waste Partnership
- 4.2 proposal that responsibility for housing, including deliver of the LAA target on affordable housing, be assigned to the North Yorkshire Strategic Housing Board
- 4.3 proposal that sole responsibility for economic matters is assigned to the York and North Yorkshire Economy and Skills Board
- 4.4 retention of environmental matters within the Stronger Thematic Partnership
- 4.5 revised Terms of Reference for the Stronger Communities Partnership
(Appendix 1)
- 4.6 revised approach to [arrangement for delivering the] discharging the responsibilities of the Rural Partnership xxx the revised Terms of Reference
(Appendix 2)

Appendix 1**Stronger Communities Partnership Terms of Reference****1. Introduction**

The Stronger Communities Partnership is a thematic partnership within the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership (NYSP). As such, it will advise the NYSP on the content of the Stronger Community elements of the Sustainable Communities Strategy and will support the delivery of the strategy and the Local Area Agreement in relation to these issues.

The purpose of these Terms of Reference is to ensure there is clarity on the aims of the Stronger Communities Partnership and promote co-operation between the organisations involved.

2. Aims

Stronger communities can be characterised as those where:-

- People get on well and have a sense of community which binds people together (cohesion)
- People have got access to the things and services that matter to them (social inclusion)
- People feel that their opinions matter and they are able to actively influence the way things are done and can contribute towards their community (engagement & involvement)
- The longer term future is secure and people are able to thrive (economic, social and environmental sustainability)

The purpose of the Stronger Communities Partnership is to provide a forum in which partners can work together to plan and act in such a way that adds value. Partnership commissioned work should therefore result in greater impact and / or efficiency given that it is better informed and benefits from a wider range of resources to deliver its objectives.

The areas identified below are those which can readily be identified as making a significant contribution towards developing stronger communities but there is a need to ensure that other areas are also considered where appropriate:-

a) Access

People from all backgrounds and communities need to be able to access key information and services that are relevant to their particular circumstances. Access is particularly important for those vulnerable members of society. The nature of the county of North Yorkshire means that it will never be possible to provide services (whether private, public or voluntary) to the same standards across the board. It is, however, important that all have the means to get access to what they need when required whether that involves face to face, telephone or web communications.

b) Transport

Develop a network of high-quality, affordable public and community transport, infrastructure and information services and increase the availability and use of Community Transport. Such a network will assist in promoting access and sustainability.

c) Third Sector

A thriving third sector demonstrates a healthy and vibrant community. Such communities are likely to be more resilient, better able to articulate their needs and better placed to work towards achieving their objectives. The Partnership will be the strategic lead for ensuring that third sector issues are readily understood, recognised and considered in the work of NYSP agencies. :

d) Engagement and Cohesion

The Partnership will be the strategic lead for:

- The NYSP's community engagement and neighbourhood management framework
- The LAA targets on community cohesion and civic participation
- Planning for and reporting to Place Survey and other related consultations

3. Approach

The Stronger Communities Partnership is, on behalf of the NYSP, the strategic lead for the issues identified above. It therefore needs to ensure that it has a good overview and its membership reflects the key areas of focus.

The cross-cutting nature of much of the work of the Stronger Communities Partnership means that there is a need to adopt many different approaches to its work. These will include:-

- Identification of existing gaps
- Horizon scanning to ensure that future priorities are determined
- Commissioning of activity (including creation of dedicated groups to progress specific areas on behalf of the Partnership)
- Monitoring of activity including relevant areas of the Local Area Agreement
- Supporting and scrutinising the work of other groups including other Thematic Partnerships who have a role in developing stronger communities
- Acting as an advocate for North Yorkshire communities (e.g. community engagement and third sector issues)

Representatives need to be chosen to ensure that there is a representative group and that they key organisations to promoting stronger communities are able to engage. This will require responsibilities to work on behalf of the overall Partnership on occasions as opposed to simply representing their own respective organisations.

- 1 representative from Rural Action Yorkshire
- 1 representative from the Thriving Third Sector
- 1 representative from NYCC
- 1 representative from each District Council/LSP

- 1 representative from each National Park Authority
- 1 representative (as lead) from Access group (to attend as required)
- 1 representative (as lead for Community Transport) from the Rural Transport and Access Group
- 1 representative (as lead) from Community Engagement group (to attend as required)
- 1 representative from the Sustainable Officers Group
- 1 representative from GOYH

Appendix 2

Rural Partnership Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Rural Partnership is a thematic partnership which seeks to support the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership (NYSP) and the City of York on rural matters.

The purpose of the Terms of Reference is to ensure there is clarity on the aims of the Partnership and to promote co-operation and joint working between relevant organisations.

2. Aims

The work of the Rural Partnership should result in:-

- Rural issues and challenges being better understood across the sub-region
- Key rural challenges being addresses by partners
- Effective lobbying of government and other bodies using evidence based arguments
- More sustainable rural communities and a more sustainable countryside

The purpose of the Rural Partnership is to provide a forum in which partners can work together to plan and act in such a way that adds value. Partnership commissioned work should therefore result in greater impact and / or efficiency given that it is better informed and benefits from a wider range of resources to deliver its objectives.

3. Approach

The Rural Partnership will need to act as a body of expertise on occasions but needs to work with other partners and Thematic Partnerships who are experts in their own fields and work in a rural context on a daily basis. The Rural Partnership will therefore need to “challenge” and “support” in order to ensure that rural issues are given due attention.

The Rural Partnership will therefore:-

- Ensure that rural issues are considered in the way in which partners conduct their business
- Articulate the rural needs and challenges of the sub region including production of a York and North Yorkshire Rural Strategy
- Support partners and Thematic Partnerships in rural proofing their services
- Act as a rural advocate for the sub-region
- Horizon scan to ensure that future challenges and priorities are determined.

The membership of the Rural Partnership will include:-

- 1 representative from Rural Action Yorkshire
- 1 representative from the Thriving Third Sector
- 1 representative from NYCC
- 1 representative from each District Council/LSP
- 1 representative from the City of York
- 1 representative from each National Park Authority
- 1 representative from the rural businesses (including agriculture)
- 1 representative from English Heritage
- 1 representative from Natural England
- 1 representative from Environment Agency
- 1 representative from GOYH
- 1 representative from North Yorkshire Police
- 1 representative from North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue
- 1 representative of the PCT
- 1 representative from Welcome Yorkshire (Tourism) in North Yorkshire
- 1 representative from the Rural Affairs Forum Management Group in the event that one of the above is not part of the group

Representatives need to be chosen to ensure that there is a representative group and that they key organisations to promoting stronger communities are able to engage. This will require responsibilities to work on behalf of the overall Partnership on occasions as opposed to simply representing their own respective organisations.