

North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership – Executive

2 October 2008

Development of a Local Information System

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform the Executive of Local Information Systems, to advise on the development of Neighbourhood Profiles by North Yorkshire County Council and to gain approval for the establishment of a task and finish officer group to consider the implications of developing this work into a Local Information System for the NYSP.

2 Introduction

2.1 What is a Local Information System (LIS)?

A Local Information System may include performance data and a collection of contextual information that may be collected at a national or local level which is then used by one or more public organisations to measure performance, identify priorities for improvement, set targets and inform local citizens about their areas and the performance of their local services.

- 2.2 In the County Council, a start has been made on the development of a data warehouse and a structuring of the collected data, to mirror the LAA themes, in order to develop Neighbourhood Profiles based on groupings of wards within the District Council areas.

This work has been developed to underpin our evidence base for the new CAA assessment regime, but could have wider applications – and has the potential to ‘grow into’ a Local Information System.

The work is now at a stage where the data can be presented graphically within charts and maps and is robust enough to be locally interesting. Sets of data are now available for Scarborough and Selby District Council areas. The work is at a stage where, if the NYSP wished, it could be developed into a tool which was of wider application than that currently under development by the County Council.

- 2.3 This report therefore provides an overview of the work to date and suggests a way forward for the NYSP to make use of this work.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Government White Paper in 2006 outlined the need to support and develop LISs.

- 3.2 In February 2008 the Audit Commission published a discussion paper entitled 'In the know', which promoted the better use of information to improve decision making processes in public services. It stated that performance indicators alone are not adequate to make decisions and that aggregating information, for example geographically or over time, and using a range of information from different sources, and sharing information, provides a much fuller picture on which to base decisions.
- 3.3 The Department for Communities and Local Government has accepted this concept and supported it by the resourcing of:
- a national LIS network
 - an on line community of practise (the IDeA esd toolkit)
 - commissioning research
- 3.4 Many LIS formats have now been developed to provide communities and partner public sector organisations with web based access to local information, and there is a wealth of good practise to look at and choose from.

4 Current NYCC position

- 4.1 The changes to the Audit Commission inspection regime, introducing the concept of area assessments from April 2009, persuaded the County Council that it had to improve its knowledge about the quality of life within local neighbourhoods. In January 2008 it therefore embarked on a pilot process to identify 'neighbourhoods' within Scarborough District (in cooperation with the Borough Council) and to populate these areas with national, regional and local data. At the same time the County Council enhanced its ability to manipulate the data and to present it more effectively both in chart and in map formats.
- 4.2 Subsequently the Council has sought to:
- raise the awareness of its ongoing work with LSP Coordinators, within District Councils and with individual partner organisations
 - work with Selby District Council to identify neighbourhoods and provide data sets for those areas
 - develop a timetable for the roll out to all other District Council areas by April 2009
 - request information on data sets held by partner organisations to help develop the 'data register' and 'data warehouse'
 - streamline the data handling processes
 - develop a draft data sharing protocol
 - look further into good practise in the region

5 Development Options

5.1 Option 1

The County Council could continue to develop its locality profiles for its own uses with the informal help of partners to populate the data sets, charts and maps, making information available to the NYSP generally and to the public as it becomes available via the NYSP web pages. Whilst the information would be useful, it would be limited in scope and would not include any interactivity or manipulability by the public or partners.

5.2 Option 2

The NYSP partners could 'buy in' to the LIS process over time, as needs dictated and as resources of the individual organisations allowed.

It is already the case that the Police and CDRPs have recognised the problems associated with the development of the Joint Strategic Intelligence Assessment documents –which require a new way of looking at neighbourhood issues to more robustly identify underlying socio economic factors which affect the incidence of crime and antisocial behaviour. The Police have responded by agreeing to the commitment of a staffing resource into the NYCC team to assist with developing this area of work.

Other partners, for example those involved in the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (PCT, NYCC) may see similar benefits of this approach.

Whilst this type of development is useful for the contributory partners in the development of their strategic documents, it does not fully address the emerging agenda to engage with and allow increased participation of residents and communities in the decision making processes. Residents can only engage meaningfully if they have access to comprehensive data on local quality of life and service/ performance standards. This is not currently available.

This type of GIS based interactive service provision for the community would need significant initial investment in IT capacity (capital) and a long term revenue resource allocation to maintain the systems.

5.3 Option 3

To provide a resource for communities, individuals and partners similar to the web based interactive facilities available now within many of our neighbouring authorities new IT server capacity would be required, plus a new software package to present a visually attractive, interactive facility, plus increased staff resources to handle the data, maintain

effective systems administration arrangements and to deal with increased levels of community requests.

Through successful partner bids for external funding, or through partners capital commitments, funding could be provided to provide hardware and software resources to implement a fully interactive NYSP LIS. The partners would, however, have to commit mainstream funding to sustain the LIS long term. Experience has demonstrated that if this commitment is not there from the outset, and short term funding solutions are relied upon, the LIS will falter over time.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 To further consider the options and to establish a way forward it is recommended that a **'task and finish' NYSP technical officer group be established.**

The remit of the group would be:

1. To examine the development options in relation to a LIS for the NYSP, including an analysis of start up and continuing costs.
2. To consider funding options.
3. To propose a preferred solution to a meeting of the NYSP Executive in Spring 2009.

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