

WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Overview & Scrutiny Committee (WD)
DATE	12 March 2013
REPORT TITLE	Review of the Connect Partnership and Related Delivery Arrangements
REPORT OF	CORPORATE DIRECTOR (AR)
WARDS AFFECTED	ALL

Summary of report:

The Connect Partnership Board and Officers have reviewed the Connect Partnership and related delivery arrangements for the four corporate priorities (community life, economy, environment and homes). The review was prompted by a combination of member feedback, the outcome from the Peer Review and reducing staffing and financial capacity both within the Council and in partner agencies.

Financial implications:

No specific financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee recommends to Council that the suggested way forward for the Connect Partnership and the related delivery arrangements, set out at paragraph 4 of the report, be adopted.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Officers have reviewed the Connect Partnership and related delivery arrangements for the four corporate priorities (community life, economy, environment and homes). The review was prompted by a combination of member feedback, the outcome from the Peer Review and reduced staffing and financial capacity both within the Council and in partner agencies.

2. SUMMARY OF THE CONNECT PARTNERSHIP BOARD VIEWS

2.1 At the Connect Partnership Board meeting on 6 December 2012, the Partnership considered the attached report (see Appendix 2) and made suggestions as follows:

- (i) To refresh representation on the Board by including a representative of Town and Parish Councils from each Council area, nominated by the Devon Association of Local Councils;
- (ii) To reduce the number of Connect Partnership Board meetings to two per annum and ensure these meetings have a stronger strategic focus, including support for town teams and other localism initiatives;
- (iii) To reduce the number of actions within the Delivery Plans to make them more focussed and to address capacity issues;
- (iv) To use existing fora (e.g. Voice initiatives) to engage with stakeholders, rather than holding separate stakeholder events for each priority and simplify the engagement arrangements by removing the stakeholder groups as illustrated in attachment 2 to the report to the Board;
- (v) To incorporate the Connect Strategy and the four separate Delivery Plans into a single document;
- (vi) To rationalise monitoring of the Delivery Plans so that the Board only receives exception reports, particularly where it is a partner organisation that is contributing to the identified issue;
- (vii) Further consideration will be required to assess how partners can more effectively support emerging town visions/strategies, in the current climate of reduced financial and staff resources.

3. SUMMARY OF VIEWS OF THE LEAD OFFICERS FOR THE DELIVERY PLANS

3.1 The lead officers felt that the Delivery Plans are important documents for coordinating partnership actions and that joint working is important for effective implementation. It was concluded that the 'Connect' identity provides a positive brand for cross agency working and is helpful when engaging with wider stakeholders.

3.2 There was support for rationalising the documentation and creating shorter, sharper action plans. It was also suggested that existing monitoring arrangements involving various member groups and the Connect Board could be rationalised.

3.3 Further clarity could also be provided in terms of key member involvement, particularly to simplify officer and member liaison arrangements. On-going member engagement in the development of action plans for homes and economy is clear (i.e. appropriate Lead Members from the Community Services Committee at WDBC and Portfolio Holders at SHDC). However, for community

life and environment, the action plans cut cross a number of member roles. Community life encompasses, amongst other issues, active communities (sport and recreation), localism, and children and young people, while the environment theme incorporates a wide range of issues, including recycling, renewable energy, and the built and natural environment.

- 3.4 As an interim arrangement, In relation to community life, informal discussions with members has resulted in the Planning, Economy & Community Portfolio Holder and the Chair of the Community Life & Housing Scrutiny Panel Chair agreeing to represent South Hams and in West Devon, it has been informally agreed that one member on the Localism Board and one of the Healthy and Active Lead Members will be the representatives.
- 3.5 Member representation has not been resolved in relation to the Environment Delivery Plan for either Council. Member engagement in one of our key external delivery plans might be helped by a more formal approach to member appointments.

4. SUGGESTED WAY FORWARD

- (i) That the Councils retain the 'Connect Brand' in terms of engaging with partners and wider stakeholders.
- (ii) The Connect Strategy to become a single document that includes focussed action plans for each of the four corporate priorities and clearly identifies the roles of specific partners in any actions.
- (iii) The Connect Partnership to become more strategic in terms of both its agenda and levels of representation and to meet six monthly rather than quarterly.
- (iv) Delivery teams to continue to meet as necessary to drive progress on the action plans.
- (v) Future stakeholder events to be arranged using scheduled meetings linked to our various Voice arrangements, rather than organised as separate events.
- (vi) Monitoring of the action plans to be undertaken on an annual basis by appropriate scrutiny groups within each Council, but in-year exception reporting to the appropriate scrutiny meeting where problems may be occurring or targets unlikely to be met.
- (vii) Member appointments to lead each theme to be adopted at Annual Council Meetings.
- (viii) A revised annual corporate timetable for the Delivery Plans is proposed as follows:
 - Autumn – stakeholder events linked to Voice initiatives

- Winter – key Delivery Team meetings
- March – progress report relating to current action plan and draft future action plans presented for each priority to appropriate scrutiny groups
- Late spring/early summer – formal adoption of the Delivery Plans by both Councils.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Connect Strategy is one of the Councils’ key policy documents that defines its priorities and the Councils’ strategic direction and must be approved by Council.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 No specific financial implications although the suggestions will create a streamlined process and reduce time pressures for members, partners and staff.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed amendments will simplify the current Connect Strategy and Delivery Plan arrangements and respond to feedback received from the Peer Review, the Connect Partnership Board, informal comments from Members and a representative sample of officers.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The risk management implications are appended to this report (Appendix 1)

9. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate priorities engaged:	Homes; Economy; Community Life; Environment
Statutory powers:	The scrutiny groups are responsible for monitoring and influencing the Connect Strategy and delivery plans. The only statutory requirement is to produce a Homelessness Strategy which has been embodied within the Homes Action Plan.
Considerations of equality and human rights:	An impact assessment was carried out on the overall delivery plans in 2011 and there are no significant consequences of the suggested amendments to the arrangements to necessitate a new assessment.
Sustainability considerations:	An impact assessment was carried out on the delivery plans in 2011 and there are no significant differences to necessitate a new assessment.
Crime and disorder implications:	An impact assessment was carried out on the delivery plans in 2011 and there are no significant differences to necessitate a new assessment.
Background papers:	Connect Strategy 2011- 2015/ Connect Strategy Annual Update 2012/13 Community Life delivery plan 2011-2015/ Community Life Annual Update 2012/13 Economy delivery plan 2011-2015 Environment delivery plan 2011-2015/ Environment

	Annual Update 2012/13 Homes delivery plan 2011-2015/ Homes Annual Update 2012/13 Connect Strategy and Delivery Progress Report
Appendices attached:	Appendix 1 - Strategic Risk Table Appendix 2 - Report to Connect Partnership Board on 6 December 2012 and associated attachments.

