NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL
DEPRIVATION AND REGENERATION REVIEW

Partner Consultation

Background

The County Council is undertaking a review of its activities contributing to addressing deprivation and local area regeneration and has established a member/officer task and finish group to lead the review. The scope of the review is to assess the role and activities of the County Council and how it can improve those functions and processes and enhance its contribution to reducing deprivation in the county.

The work of the task and finish group has been structured into three phases.
1) Self assessment
2) Peer/partner consultation
3) Options for future activity
The final report of the group is due to be completed in March 2007.

This paper gives a high level synopsis of findings from the Council’s self assessment of its work in this area. It is presented to enable partners to contribute observations and ideas for the task and finish group to consider as part of its review.

Process

Phase 1 of the review involved a self-assessment examining the ‘role’ and ‘activity’ of the Council in this area, looking at ‘what it does well’ and proposing ‘key areas for improvement’. The purpose was to provide a “high level “ baseline position of the current approach and priorities of the County Council in this area. The task and finish group followed a CPA ‘key lines of enquiry’ approach in order to establish its baseline position.

The County Council has examined its leadership, coordination and service delivery functions against the following areas:

- Addressing deprivation
- Promoting civic pride
- Building social capital and local champions
- Coordinating access to funding streams
- Mainstreaming equality and diversity
- Creating and participating in effective partnerships
- Coordinating and planning to maximise impact

The task and finish group is keen to seek the views of key partners on this review, to assess if (in particular) the ‘role’ and proposed ‘key areas of improvement’ for the Council are in line with partners views. The task and finish group would also welcome observations and ideas that could be examined as part of this review.

Overview

Tackling deprivation and social exclusion is not an activity where any one organisation should consider itself as the lead. It is clearly appropriate for Norfolk County Council to lead on certain issues, but it also has a supporting role in local areas and, in particular, when in partnership with LSP’s and local authorities.
Our approach to date can be seen on two levels:

Firstly, routinely ensuring that our policies, strategies and decisions take full account of the impact on deprivation in our communities, and that collectively across all services, we work to create the right conditions for people to reach their full potential.

Increasingly services are working together to provide a more joined-up service for clients that add value to their separate contributions although we can always do more.

Secondly, Norfolk County Council targets special help for those in particular need, and this includes attracting external funding across the county or into specific geographic communities or communities of interest.

The following sections highlight the findings from the County Council's self assessment and forms the basis for a presentation and discussion at LSP Boards, with a particular focus on the ‘role’ and ‘key areas for improvement’.
Addressing deprivation

Role

- Establishing a baseline position of need
- Addressing those issues at local level, through both its service provision and coordination of funding streams
- Coordination of Local Area Agreement (LAA).

What activity looks like now

- Prioritised deprivation as one of its 8 main priorities
- Led production of Norfolk Regeneration Strategy and accountable body for Investing in Communities programme
- Sure Start, Children’s Centres and Raising Aspirations.
- Tackling deprivation and social exclusion is implicit in the County Council Plan and in service delivery.
- Services across the County Council take account of deprivation factors in corporate and service policy directives and these are reflected in departmental service plans.

What we do well

- Effective partnership working, good examples of which are Children’s Partnership, the County Strategic Partnership (CSP), Local Area Agreement LAA, Investing In Communities (IIC) and Shaping Norfolk’s Future (SNF).
- Catalyst for regeneration - good examples are Eastport (outer harbour), NORA in West Norfolk, InteGreat and 1st East (Urban Regeneration Company).
- Services directly address the indicators of deprivation – for example, employment, health, disability, education, and crime and disorder.

Key areas for improvement

- The County Council could be more explicit about its aspirations and approaches for addressing deprivation and social exclusion.
- The County Council could strengthen its support for area-based initiatives creating a better shared understanding of the specific needs of a particular geographic area.
- Better understand needs in rural areas.
Promoting civic pride

Role

- Community leadership role promoting 'civic pride'.
- A champion for Norfolk

What activity looks like now

- Engages with the development of local community strategies.
- Contributing to civic pride on a project by project basis.

What we do well

- Actively promote Norfolk with a number of influential stakeholders, and the local media.
- Contributes to other programmes, initiatives and partnerships which engage local communities and help develop a sense of place and community.

Key areas for improvement

- Explore whether it has the right balance between its countywide strategic role in promoting civic pride, and engagement with others in local communities.
Building social capital and local champions

Role

- Provide a responsive and supportive role to local and parish Councils, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and coordinate business engagement at a countywide level.
- Feed into regional activity.
- Support local activity aimed at strengthening and building capacity within communities through working with local partners.

What activity looks like now

- Significant contribution to the infrastructure of the voluntary and community sector, parish and rural community councils, both in direct grant support and in kind.
- Engages with the development of local community strategies
- Links through various means with regional bodies

What we do well

- Supports the VCS in separating out contractual relationships with infrastructure development and project delivery.
- Funding is provided in the form of grants and service level agreements to a wide range of voluntary and community organisations.
- Engages with LSPs through Cabinet Member and Chief Officer involvement and supports Market Town Partnerships.
- Supports staff in engaging in community activity.
- County Council services support local capacity building through, for example, the provision of facilities and premises, officer time and advice.

Key areas for improvement

- Consider a more proactive rather than reactive approach. (The Local Area Agreement provides an established framework for this).
Coordinating access to funding streams

Role

- Accountable body status supporting role in coordinating funding streams from external bodies - eg LAA.
- Proactive role in accessing external funding streams for countywide delivery.
- Catalytic role in enabling regeneration to take place and a support capacity to enable other organisations to access specific funding streams.

What activity looks like now

- Manages a range of external funding streams and coordinates others through the LAA.
- Provides resources to assist partner organisations and the VCS to access external funding streams.
- Acts as a catalyst through its services and strategies to enable regeneration and tackle deprivation.
- Helps maximise the impact of resources within the LAA and other funding streams and support delivery.

What we do well

- Good track record of attracting external funding, for example, Norfolk Connect, Rural Development Programme, Lottery funds, IIC and European funding.
- Support the development of district based bids, including Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, Safer Stronger, Growth Points and Objective 2 projects (eg Museums and Heritage).

Key areas for improvement

- The Council's Value for Money strategy has identified the need to review our approach to external funding to ensure we are maximising the benefits in line with our priorities.
- More flexible collaborative funding is needed to develop and support new services.
Mainstreaming equality and diversity (within the context of addressing deprivation and social inclusion)

Role

- Responsibility to ensure that in all areas of its involvement in deprivation and social exclusion, equality and diversity issues are addressed as central components of intervention.

What activity looks like now

- Community leadership through the Community Cohesion Strategy Group.
- Organisational programme of equalities and diversity work.
- Equalities Plan and a corporate approach to social cohesion.
- Equality impact assessments in major service reviews or proposed changes.
- LSP’s have their own equality and diversity policies, which the County Council contributes towards.
- Equality proofing of the LAA has taken place and the IIC programme is developing an equality and diversity plan and process for impact assessment.

What we do well

- With Norfolk Police, we have taken a high profile lead on raising the profile of issues relating to migrant workers in Norfolk.
- Leading a joint approach with other public sector partners in relation to new Disability Discrimination legislation which has led to a coordinated programme of consultation and involvement.
- Perform well against the local government equalities standard (level 3 out of 4).
- Services are actively involved in locally led projects, the development of networks, and work with the voluntary sector.

Key areas for improvement

- Better understand the profile of users of our services.
- Drill down a better understanding of the challenges and issues relating to equality and diversity through the organisation.
- Improve engagement with hard to reach groups.
Creating and participating in effective partnerships

Role

- Leadership role in creating countywide partnerships like the CSP, Shaping Norfolk’s Future and IIC programme.
- Supporting role in appropriate local partnership arrangements.

What activity looks like now

- Lead key partnerships addressing deprivation or social exclusion issues - for example, IIC,
- Participate in local area regeneration partnerships, and all district local strategic partnerships.
- Services connect through the co-ordination of countywide networks with key partners and stakeholders.
- Services consult with residents and stakeholders to understand needs and plan services accordingly.

What we do well

- Consistently engage in partnerships and lead where appropriate.
- Provide hands-on support and capacity where there are gaps.

Key areas for improvement

- The County Council is currently reviewing its approach to partnership working through Cabinet Scrutiny. One issue that this is likely to explore is how the Council evaluates the added value it achieves from partnership working.
- Explore further opportunities to work in partnership with other providers of universally available services, such as leisure and education, in the delivery of services.
Coordinating and planning activities to maximise impact

Role

- Maximise impact of investment by coordinating countywide programmes and seeking to ensure that funding streams are connected.
- Take a strategic view of countywide programmes and contribute to the coordination of funding streams in local areas.

What activity looks like now

- Leads coordination and planning of activity and intervention through the LAA and IIC programmes.
- Contributes to and supports local area activity and other partnerships such as Shaping Norfolk’s Future.

What we do well

- Provides effective at coordination and linkage at a high level and on specific projects.
- Supports groups with capacity, e.g. helping with neighbourhood policing (the LAA is the vehicle to do this).

Key areas for improvement

- Consider whether the County Council needs to strengthen its coordination of activity throughout the organisation so that all services and departments can align and contribute.