

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**SUBMISSION FROM THE SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**Partnerships and Outcomes**

The Scottish Borders provides an effective community planning partnership model for the delivery of public services and the Scottish Borders Single Outcome Agreement. A key factor in achieving this is that the Scottish Borders has benefited greatly from having key public agencies sitting alongside the Council with similar administrative boundaries, particularly NHS Borders, the 'G' division of Lothian and Borders Police, and Borders College as well as a range of voluntary bodies such as Volunteer Centre Borders. This has allowed partners to focus on the particular rural and small towns' issues and challenges facing the Scottish Borders.

The Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership has enabled the development of initiatives such as the integrated Safer Communities and Public Protection Units and the appointment of a joint Director of Public Health. Major efforts have been made to work with the voluntary sector as evidenced by the Voluntary Sector Compact and the 'Framework for the Third Sector in the Scottish Borders' 2009 -2012, and more recently the Voluntary Sector Conversation event held in November 2010.

There are also: a very successful joint Local Strategic Housing Partnership, which has developed a strong track record in the provision of social housing and tackling homelessness; the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, which is tackling drugs and alcohol misuse; and the Working Countryside group which involves partners with land management interests and discusses rural development, countryside and agricultural matters.

The Best Value (BV) Audit published in May 2010 stated that 'the Council works well with its partners and it welcomed evidence of effective collaboration on services such as health improvement, jointly provided social care, and community safety This effective partnership working is achieving good outcomes for the local community'.

Over the past few months a review of Community Planning has been carried out by the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership.

The review has indicated the need to:

- Develop the strategic leadership, planning and performance scrutiny of Community Planning and the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) based on a simplification and streamlining of delivery structures that involves a stronger programme and project approach focused on a vision and four themes. The themes are early intervention and prevention; place and communities; economy and infrastructure; and public service improvement. These reflect the emphasis the Scottish

Government has placed on economic growth and prevention. The themes would be developed as programmes with projects delivering on the national SOA outcomes. It is planned that the theme programmes would choose local outcome indicators that are drawn primarily from the national list. It is intended that equality and diversity, sustainability and rural proofing would be embedded within these themes.

- Strengthen the delivery mechanisms between partners. This would involve much more integrated working between public bodies and would look at ways of involving the voluntary and community sectors more in the delivery of services.
- Develop further the localisation of public service delivery through the building on the Cheviot pilot and finding ways of empowering and engaging with local managers, communities, service users and local elected members.
- Enhance the role of elected members and members of boards of agencies such as NHS Borders, Borders Colleges and the main Registered Social Landlords in the Community Planning and SOA process.

### **Benchmarking and Performance Measurement**

It is considered that a systematic approach to benchmarking and comparative performance is crucial the performance management of local authorities and local community planning partnerships. Effective benchmarking allows the identification of opportunities for further improvements to services, the exchange of best practices and the exchange and transfer of knowledge.

For benchmarking to operate effectively there is a need for a commonality of approach in the definition of services and data to be used for comparative purposes.

To reflect the changes in public service delivery which is involving more joint and integrated working between public and other bodies there is a need to extend benchmarking to local community planning partnerships. To achieve this, the menu of local outcome indicators that has been produced by the Scottish Government for the development of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAS) should be used by all community planning partners. This would enable a consistent approach to compare practice across Scotland.

### **Developing new ways of delivering services**

The Scottish Borders has already a strong track record in the development of joint and integrated services. These include the integrated Safer Communities unit involving the Council and Lothian and Borders Police and public protection services for children and adults involving the Council, NHS Borders and Lothian and Borders Police.

Other examples include the Joint Council/NHS Borders Director of Public Health and integrated Children's and Older People's Service within the

Council, and with NHS Borders support which has its main ethos as a child centred and early interventionist approach.

At the local level work is on going in the Cheviot area by the Council, NHS Borders, Housing Associations, communities and other voluntary bodies using the 'Integrated Resource Framework' and 'Total Place' philosophies to achieve a much more joined up approach to health and social care delivery.

It is intended as part of the review of Community Planning to develop new ways of delivering services which will take account of the rising demand for services through demographic change and the decline of public expenditure. The Scottish Borders is a pathfinder to develop local arrangements for police, fire and community safety and it is hoped that service innovations and opportunities will arise from this work.

## **Conclusions**

It is considered that in relation to the three strands being looked at in public service reform improvements can be made by the following actions:

- A shared and common duty of best value and community planning should be introduced across all public bodies. This duty should be refined to include the purpose of achieving demonstrable improvements in outcomes for the people and area for a community planning partnership. Furthermore, all public bodies working in an area should be charged with a duty of community planning and therefore to work in partnership with other public bodies in an area. This would alleviate some of the difficulties experienced with constitutionally reserved institutions and departments. The roles of other sectors in community planning should also be clarified. The emphasis here is on the public sector, but if the Third Sector and communities are to be equal partners then their roles need to be clarified and partners need to assist in building their capacity and in recognising their roles.
- The power to advance wellbeing should be extended to all public bodies. This would help embed the outcomes approach and also help to gain commitment to, and accountability for, the shared delivery of collective outcomes in the SOA.
- There should be better alignment of financial years and provision of budgets across all partners. Providing a more common approach across public bodies would enhance partnership working and help partners who work with, and receive funds from, public bodies to better plan for the future and align their longer term priorities with community plans.
- There is a need to reconsider the short timescales for Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) (and in some cases community plans) to reflect the fact that some indicators are very long term in nature and are unlikely to change significantly in three years. Community planning should be about long term strategic planning over 10 or more years.
- There is a need for a shift in the balance back towards the local rather than the national. This would mean shared accountability for local

outcomes, indicators and targets in the context of the national performance framework.