

Public sector **peer review**

Warwickshire
March 2010

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Executive summary and key recommendations

Summary

There is some good partnership working in Warwickshire which is delivering positive outcomes for local people, and this is particularly evident at operational level. Across all partner organisations there is a willingness to improve and work together to make a difference for residents, and many people are working hard to bring this about.

Despite this, the multiplicity of partnership bodies operating in Warwickshire has resulted in layers of structural and process arrangements which are unwieldy and often default to a very local level of decision making instead of contributing to strategic delivery across the county. This local focus at district LSP level can appear to be in competition with, and threatened by county wide arrangements, and illustrates overall a lack of buy-in and ownership of the Public Service Board (PSB).

How the Warwickshire Public Service Board (PSB) partnership currently operates is best described as dysfunctional, with a number of serious issues that require urgent attention. Current working arrangements are hampering progress to achievement to the extent that the reputation of the partnership is suffering and this may in turn affect the reputation of the individual organisations within the PSB. Although there are achievements being made, this is coupled with a high level of dissatisfaction about partnership working and many participants struggle to describe the added value of the PSB.

There is a need to build relationships across organisations at senior level and to develop trust between partners. Relationships at operational level appear to be generally good and real efforts are made to ensure that progress is achieved. At senior level however, where there are relationships they are often fractured and awkward, but often relationships have not been forged in the first place.

The second key issue is the absence of connectivity between the various partnership structures and processes, which means that many activities are undertaken in isolation of, or in parallel to, each other. Many participants express frustration at the lack of linkages between the blocks and feel that more could be achieved by having a better understanding of what other blocks are delivering or planning to deliver, and to ensure that duplication is minimised. At a day to day level individuals have developed their own systems and approaches which in effect bypass formal partnership structures so that they can make progress and deliver outcomes on the ground.

The third issue is the degree of bureaucracy surrounding the various partnership structures and processes, which appears to be extensive. Some of this is hereditary in that the original arrangements were established to deal with the Local Area Agreement and the formal performance reporting requirements involved to do this were detailed and procedural. The PSB as an entity has emerged from this approach, which is now out of date and does not service the needs of the partners, nor the public.

A number of significant partnership myths are in circulation which attempt to explain why progress is not being made. All partners have a responsibility to actively tackle these myths to ensure that these do not become a further barrier to improvement:

- *That the health sector is not engaged.* There is evidence of renewed efforts from health partners, particularly the PCT and this has been aided by the willingness of those new in post to deliver.

- *That the lack of progress is due to the county council's approach.* Whilst WCC is a significant player, everyone has a responsibility to work towards progress, and there is some evidence to suggest that some partners have stepped away from the partnership.
- *The forthcoming governance review and associated changes to structures will bring about improvement.* The real issue at stake is the commitment of partners, so changing structures will only have a limited impact unless behaviour changes.
- *A continued focus on process will bring about change.* Processes are extensive and have become self serving.
- *That progress would be achieved if partner x or y committed more funds.* The current and future financial settlements for the public sector are unlikely to yield more money, and greater progress will be made by adapting mainstream budgets
- *The 2 tier structure of local government in Warwickshire is a barrier to improvement.* The current arrangements are unlikely to be changed for at least the next 4-5 years, so real efforts should be made to deliver on outcomes rather than wait for a structural solution which may be if at all is years away. The challenge is to make the current arrangements work better.

Although the findings from the governance review are due to be implemented in April 2010, there are concerns that this will not address the real issues about complex processes and structures and negative behaviours. A fresh approach to leadership by partners and their officers is urgently required, alongside a commitment from partners to build new relationships and gain a much better understanding of the each others' agendas. This includes some exploration of the performance regimes that partners work to on an individual organisational basis and developing understanding of what is and what is not possible.

Real progress will only be made if common interests are shared and explored. This means that everyone needs to become involved together in leadership development at the highest levels, and starts to think differently about not what they can take from the partnership, but where they can add value to the arrangements and impact, and begin to think about partnership working as being about Warwickshire as a whole.

Key recommendations

The recommendations of the peer-review team are set out under the four main themes given in the feedback presentation on 5th March, as follows:

Leadership

1. Develop a simple and clear focus on outcomes for the people of Warwickshire
2. Work to deliver 2 or 3 major priorities at any one time, for example Narrowing the Gap, preparing for the increasing aged population, and the economic recession
3. Explore opportunities to improve dialogue and develop an open and honest culture
4. In order to improve effectiveness and impact, explore and articulate how the range of partnership bodies can be held to account for their performance
5. Take steps to understand and respect each others' businesses including operating contexts and different performance regimes
6. Work together to develop a strong collaborative leadership style
7. Invest in leadership development across the partnership with a specific emphasis on facilitated relationship development between the county council and health, and the county council and district/borough councils. This should be agreed as compulsory for everyone at senior/Board level
8. More time needs to be dedicated to improving relationships

Working at local and sub-regional levels

9. Build on the established local community forums to improve public confidence in public services
10. Improve linkages between forums, local strategic partnerships and the Public Service Board
11. Further develop the Warwickshire partnership to maximise the opportunities for sub-regional working

Communicating and celebrating success

12. Celebrate success and share good practice already in existence across the area, and identify key successes achieved through membership of PSB
13. Develop a clear model for effective communication between all partners and the community
14. Develop the role of PSB members to enable them to be ambassadors for partnership working

Improved officer support for partnership working

15. Public sector Chief Officers need to meet on a regular basis to:
 - Ensure continuous dialogue
 - Take an overview of the partnership programme
 - Remove barriers and ensure linkages are made
 - Take responsibility
16. Develop a policy support group to ensure a shared agenda and programme is delivered
17. Ensure that agendas:
 - Reflect all partners' interests
 - Are more focused
 - Are available well in advance

Report

Background

18. The Warwickshire Public Service Board invited IDeA to undertake the cross sector peer review in order to gain an external view of its progress against the PSB's Improvement Plan agreed by partners in October 2009.
19. A peer review is designed to help assess current achievements and capacity to change. The peer review is not an inspection. Instead it offers a supportive approach, undertaken by friends – albeit 'critical friends'. It aims to help identify its current strengths, as much as what needs to improve.
20. The basis for this review is the partnership's own bespoke improvement plan. The headline themes are:
 - What works well?
 - Delivering improved outcomes
 - Political and managerial leadership
 - Community engagement and communication
 - Governance and risk management
 - Financial and resource management
21. The members of the peer review team were:
 - Chris Williams, Chief Executive, Buckinghamshire County Council
 - Jane Scott, Leader, Wiltshire Council
 - Ross Henley, Leader, Taunton Deane Council
 - Stephen Harrison, Chair, NHS North Somerset
 - Gill Galliano, Chief Executive, NHS Lewisham
 - Alan Goodrum, Chief Executive, Chiltern District Council
 - Gerry Broadbent, Chief Superintendent, West Yorkshire Police
 - Judith Hurcombe, Review Manager, IDeA
22. The team was onsite from 1st to 5th March 2010. The programme for the onsite phase included activities designed to enable members of the team to meet and talk to a range of partnership stakeholders across Warwickshire. These activities included:
 - Interviews, discussions and workshops with councillors, officers and partners from the 6 councils, health, police and voluntary sectors, as well as other stakeholders
 - Focus groups with participating managers from across the PSB block and theme groups
 - Observation of local forums and informal discussions with local residents
 - Reading documents provided by the partnership
23. A questionnaire was sent to partners for their views about partnership working in Warwickshire, and the results from this were collated by the Warwickshire Observatory and shared with the review team ahead of the onsite phase. The results from this survey are reflected, alongside evidence collected onsite, in this report.

24. A wide range of officers were involved in making arrangements for the peer review and supporting the team onsite, including from the district/borough councils and partner organisations. In particular we would like to give thanks to Nicole North and Dale Sparrow from Warwickshire County Council.
25. Our feedback to partners on the last day of the review gave an overview of the key messages. This report builds on the initial findings and gives a detailed account of the review. It includes a wide range of comments provided by people involved in partnership working in Warwickshire, and these views have been made anonymous. The report is structured around the areas of the partnership benchmark listed above.

Context

26. Warwickshire is a predominantly rural county based at the south east of the West Midlands region. The major towns are Leamington Spa, Warwick, Stratford-on-Avon, Rugby and Nuneaton. Warwickshire is perceived to a relatively affluent county with good quality of life and environment for its 522,000 residents.
27. The county's population is anticipated to grow faster than the national average over the next five years, including a two percent rise in the number of young people and a high rate of increase in the numbers of older people. Deprivation is low overall although there are pockets of deprivation in the north of the county. The majority of residents are from white British groups, and there are growing numbers of residents from minority ethnic groups including Indian, Black and Chinese populations.
28. Warwickshire Public Service Board first met in April 2007 and it fulfils the role of the county-wide local strategic partnership. The remit of the PSB is:

“Warwickshire Public Service Board aims to make a real and lasting improvement to the well being of people in the county by joining together to improve public services across Warwickshire. It brings together key partner agencies within Warwickshire to collectively take decisions within applicable legal parameters which make a positive difference to Warwickshire residents.”

29. The PSB is chaired by Cllr Alan Farnell, Leader of Warwickshire County Council. It's membership currently comprises:

- Councillor Alan Farnell, Warwickshire County Council
- Councillor Michael Doody, Warwick District Council
- Councillor Marcus Jones, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
- Councillor Colin Hayfield, North Warwickshire Borough Council
- Councillor Craig Humphrey, Rugby Borough Council
- Councillor Les Topham, Stratford on Avon District Council
- William Clemmey, Coventry and Warwickshire Infrastructure Consortium (CWIC)
- Louise Bennett, Chief Executive, Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
- Ian Francis, Chair, Warwickshire Police Authority
- Kim Thorneywork, Chief Executive, Coventry and Warwickshire Learning & Skills Council
- Bryan Stoten, Chair, Warwickshire Primary Care Trust
- Councillor Vaughan Owen, Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils (WALC)

30. A Sustainable Community Strategy was agreed by partners during 2009, which has a vision based on three broad themes of People, Places and Prosperity. There are 6 theme groups (often referred to as "blocks") operating in Warwickshire for:
- Children and young people
 - Safer communities
 - Stronger communities
 - Healthier communities and older people
 - Economic development and enterprise
 - Climate change and environment
31. The One Place public sector inspectorate report in December 2009 reported a "red flag" for Warwickshire, stating that an area of action is "ensuring all organisations improve the success and well-being of the people of Warwickshire".

What's working well?

- Good partnership working “despite the system”
- Strong themes e.g., economic development, community safety
- Partnership working with the Police delivers good outcomes
- Many examples of good partnership working involving health, including Putting People First, Prevention Strategy and Supporting People
- Community Forums seen as very positive
- Work of the Observatory is highly regarded
- Good partnership working at sub regional level

32. There is strong evidence that partnership working does take place at an operational level and there are a number of examples which support this, including the ten Warwickshire Direct one stop shops and one kiosk operating around across the area, which reflect combined service delivery.
33. Within the partnership arrangement there are clearly identifiable themes that individual organisations are able to identify with and work together with others, for example in the community safety, and health and older people theme blocks.
34. Consistently through the review the police were identified as a strong partner, constructive and easy to work with and recognised as delivering visible results, which are recognised by the public.
35. Health working is regarded as improving by many stakeholders, including the visible efforts that health partners have made to work with others over the last 12 months. This is noticed at project level and is welcomed.
36. The development of local community forums is widely regarded as a positive way to communicate and engage with the public, and demonstrates that public services can work together for the benefit of local people. At the forums we witnessed there was a good turnout of both members of the public and organisational representatives, and the opportunity to engage was welcomed by local residents.
37. The work of the Warwickshire Observatory in providing independent data and analysis of demographic and performance information is well regarded, and its work appears to be used by all partners to aid evidence-based decision making.
38. At sub regional level with Solihull and Coventry councils, partnership working is developing and improving, with all Warwickshire's public agencies.

Delivering improved outcomes

Strengths

- Outcomes are being achieved e.g., one stop shops, domestic violence, local forums, Camp Hill Centre, Family Intervention Service
- At operational level people are working hard and delivering

Areas for consideration

- Clarify and agree the purpose of PSB
- Operate at a more strategic level
- Focus on the big issues
- Improve relationships – personal and organisational
- Streamline working and eliminate duplication
- Harness local community strategies
- Overcome silo working – within organisations and within blocks
- Ensure improved outcomes – deliver
- Focus on working together to make a difference
- Focus on outcomes rather than processes

39. Good outcomes are being delivered across Warwickshire as a result of partnership working. For example:

- Crime statistics show improvement in road safety and drug treatment targets.
- Collaboration in Stratford between the district council, the Youth Service and the Police on an inter-generational project has reduced the number of recorded anti-social behaviour issues by 25%.
- Pride in Camp Hill is a regeneration project in Nuneaton to transform the area and make it a better place to live.
- Town centre working in Leamington Spa
- Single points of access (one stop shops) across Warwickshire
- Increased joint scrutiny work.

40. On a day to day basis there is significant officer commitment and hard work which is contributing to outcomes, e.g., there are local authority representatives on all PCT and WCC initiative groups, around 36 in total.

41. The overall message from officers across the organisations is that good partnership working takes place despite the system and structures in place, and that achievements are made because at individual and collective levels people have worked out ways of bypassing formalities, including PSB, in order to get things done. One partner described its work as largely being undertaken through a series of bi-lateral

arrangements with other partners, rather than through the PSB, which in turn results in a patchy service being delivered to service users. Accordingly the reputation of the partnership as a whole is not regarded as good by those delivering and managing services.

42. Despite outcomes being achieved at local level, it is difficult see which of these are directly attributable to partnership working through PSB, and which would have happened anyway through existing local agreements and arrangements. Throughout the course of the review participants struggled to identify the purpose of PSB, to the extent that it does not appear to be favourably regarded by either those individuals on it, nor more broadly by those involved in supporting it, with a number of people describing it as “a talking shop”. This is reflected in concerns about its added value to service delivery, the pace of decision making and an absence of quick wins that would allow participants and their organisations to identify some added value of their participation and involvement.
43. A greater focus is needed on the significant issues affecting the area that will only be achieved through cross sector working. This means that rather than trying to achieve a whole range of issues at once, efforts instead should be concentrated on tackling two to three priority areas each year.
44. Although there is evidence of some good personal relationships, there is considerable room for improvement. At some levels, particularly between membership of PSB, relationships are undeveloped and in need of attention, as although agreement and decisions appear to be made at meetings, this is not always followed through with action. Addressing this will be vital if trust and mutual understanding is to develop.
45. Not enough activity is ongoing to deliver the Narrowing the Gaps activity, specifically tackling issues of deprivation and inequality. Some partners express frustration feeling that there are promises but no action and there are concerns that there is no universal sign up to the principles in this headline objective, which will put delivery and achievement at risk.
46. The PSB improvement plan does not appear to be owned by participants, nor is regarded as a priority by them, and it is not being used to drive improved performance on outcomes. There is wide acknowledgement of slippage against the improvement plan and a failure to follow through on targets.
47. Silo working is evident at a number of levels, partnership working is needed within organisations as well as externally with others. People fall back on their own targets and silo working.
48. Projects on tackling the recession are felt by some partners as not monitored properly and therefore the outcomes were not captured or shared effectively. Although there are some groupings set up across the PSB on the recession and there are some initiatives in place e.g., the Say it Loud Forum on inward investments, and work on apprenticeships, the overall feeling is that “we could do a lot more”

Political and managerial leadership

Strengths

- CAA report broadly accepted
- PSB Chair committed to deliver services to local people
- Advisory Forum and Blocks are more energised
- New officer appointments in health have led to improvement
- Third sector are engaged and feel valued

Areas for consideration

PSB is dysfunctional. It needs to provide:

- An agreed vision for Warwickshire
- Strategic leadership
- A clear focus on outcomes
- Political commitment
- Changed attitudes and behaviours
- Increased pace

PSB lacks visibility and a positive profile. Must:

- Communicate better
- Ensure feedback to and from each organisation

PSB needs to build better relationships to move on:

- Some baggage and behaviour issues
- Tensions between county and districts, and between health and other partners
- People blame the 2 tier structure

49. The acceptance of the CAA red flag appears to be fairly widespread, although there are concerns that this acceptance is not universal and that some individuals need to move on from focussing on the wording of the report and make progress on addressing the issues it raised. We heard some people comment that they thought the assessment could have been harder about performance and impact of public sector working overall, and that the red flag is significant to partnership working at a broader level than health.

50. The role and leadership of the Chair of PSB in encouraging progress and decision making is welcomed and widely recognised by partners.

51. There is increased visibility of health partners and an overall feeling that they are becoming more engaged and active in joint working, for example on disability and mental health issues. The new appointments of PCT Chief Executive and the Joint Director of Public Health are recognised as instrumental in this improvement.
52. The PSB Advisory Forum and working in the blocks are more energised than the PSB. Some of this is due to attempts to make the Advisory Forum meetings engaging and interesting for participants, and observers suggest that they recognise commitment and enthusiasm at Forum meetings. Some however felt that the label "blocks" was unhelpful symbolism.
53. One observer suggested that the PSB meetings and participants need to "lighten up" in order to make the meetings more interesting and worth attending. Another observer suggested that it didn't matter whether or not they attended the Board meetings, as nothing seemed to change as a result of their presence or absence; others speak of PSB members' non attendance and apathy.
54. The third sector is engaged with the overall agenda and partners recognise good representation on behalf of the sector. However capacity can be an issue, and overall the sector needs to be valued more by the partnership, and ensuring better feedback to lower levels in voluntary sector is an issue for ongoing improvement.
55. Although there is an overall community strategy in place for the county, agreed during 2009, the degree of buy in to this appears to be limited, and most people appear to identify more with the district community strategies than the high level overarching vision. Some of this may be due to participants feeling that the vision is top-down and has been imposed from above, others state there is a lack of clarity about what the vision is for Warwickshire. A number of participants question the political buy-in to the principle of PSB and what it is intended to achieve. Others recognise that there is a vision in place and that on an individual basis people say the right things, but it is hard to see tangible results following from this, and there is frustration that the pace of achievement is too slow and that an area for improvement would be agreements between partners to speed up activity
56. The focus of activity at PSB level is characterised by a focus on short instead of long term objectives. There is a lack of leadership from PSB about driving the vision, as it is clear that people operating within the blocks and themes expect but do not yet receive, clear instruction and commitment from PSB in order to make things happen. At operational level commentators observe there are clear divisions between district council priorities and county wide priorities, and feel that this is because everyone has not pulled together to deliver at PSB level, which results in a lack of a county wide perspective that is hampering progress.
57. There is also a need to better understand the interconnectivity of issues across the public agencies, e.g., linkages between alcohol, domestic violence and educational attainment although there are some good links at operational levels.
58. Whilst there is a positive attitude overall to partnership working there are mixed levels of commitment and understanding. Better communication is needed throughout to encourage more dialogue and closer working together. This includes developing a strategic coordinating mechanism which would enable feedback to and from each organisation, led by the appropriate chief officers. In order to make this work it will require sustained and continued effort from all participants.
59. The predisposition between key players appears to be not to trust each other and there is often a feeling of hidden agendas, and relationships overall are mixed. Some

partners feel they work very well with others, in contrast to other descriptions of divisive relationships and political point scoring at PSB level. Historically some relationships have been perceived to be quite tense and a future challenge will be to get people to feel engaged in all the issues affecting Warwickshire, over and above what happens in each individual district.

60. Although district LSPs appear to be the main areas of activity, there are also concerns that they appear to be operating at different speeds and do not always follow through with initiatives, for example in ensuring equality impact assessments take place across relevant projects. Better communication is needed at all levels, especially between WCC and the districts, sometimes the relationship is described as paternalistic.
61. Perhaps inevitably executive members are perceived to place greater priority on their own issues and responsibilities rather than focusing on the sustainable community strategy priorities, and personal relationships and trust are felt to be better developed at LSP level. The degree of this concentration on district issues appears to vary between the districts although there are views that at least one district has taken a stance of "home rule" rather than genuine participation at strategic level. This means that some opportunities are being missed, for example in a collective view about how to address the recession. There are significant issues facing Warwickshire that will only be tackled through partnership working both within the county boundary and more broadly at sub regional level, e.g., some crime is committed by offenders who live outside of Warwickshire but travel across the border from Coventry and Solihull.
62. Political acceptance is needed about the need to address some of the big challenges facing the area and for people to start to work together to understand and lead on these challenges. Elected members should play a strong role in the work of all partnership bodies such as the PSB and LSP's, to build a better reputation for partnership working as a whole.

Community engagement and communication

Strengths

- Community forums are a good vehicle for encouraging partnership working at local level
- Strong police neighbourhood focus and accountability
- Good examples of joined up services in certain locations e.g., co-location at Rugby

Areas for consideration

- Third sector need consistent engagement and communication to maximise their contribution to the partnership
- Engage the wider health partners e.g., hospitals, GP's
- External communication and engagement to cover hard to reach groups
- Promote success and good news

63. There are 30 community forums established across the county and they are widely acknowledged to be working well at operational level, often providing a good focus for problem solving, as well as more broadly engaging with local residents. Some observers feel that better use can be made of the existing forums to gain information of local need and issues.

64. There is a strong core of county, district and police officers working at local level. In particular the police are well regarded, described by one stakeholder as "tremendous" to work with, and some of this is due to the level of empowerment devolved to officers at local level

65. Officers like the partnership website and there are genuine efforts to make information accessible, for example, the Children's and Young Persons' Plan has an electronic version which is open to the public, who can track progress.

66. There is demand for greater input from health partners as many stakeholders recognise that they cannot deliver individual or collective objectives without them. However, there has been over reliance on the PCT to provide the main health input into the partnership. The responsibility to engage on health matters falls more widely than simply with the PCT and further consideration should be given to involving other health partners, such as GP's, mental health and hospital and ambulance trusts.

67. PCT absence at strategic level can cause frustration of other partners, although there is recognition of good engagement at LSP level for projects. Greater visibility from the broader health partners at community forum level would add value to the meetings and reduce over reliance on one's partner's capacity to provide all the health input into projects.

68. There is good working between staff across partner organisations on community and voluntary sector development, for example there are moves towards a standard grant application form to be used by all partners in Warwickshire. However earlier engagement with the third sector is needed, particularly notification of issues and events so that they can mobilise.

69. The external profile of the PSB and what it has achieved is low. There is recognition that engagement with hard to reach groups needs to be improved and then information collectively shared in order to influence service delivery. Communications across the partnership lacks coherence. Better sharing of information relating to different services delivered between partners is needed, and this applies to information about issues as well as success stories and achievements.

Governance and risk management

Areas for consideration

- PSB partnership agenda management
- Too much focus on process and not enough on outcomes
- Dislocation between PSB priorities and LSP's
- PSB used for information sharing, not driving a shared agenda
- Too many groups and partnerships
- No follow up actions from PSB
- Wrong people on PSB

70. The agenda management aspects of PSB need further attention, as participants describe current arrangements as often having late agenda papers, and little or no apparent briefing for board participants. Not everyone seems to be aware of the process for submitting papers to the Board and there are also concerns that reports are tabled at meetings or submitted at short notice, resulting in reduced opportunities for internal discussions and officer input. In turn this is a contributory factor to the lack of debate about key issues or about general agreement which is not then acted upon. This affects the willingness and confidence of Board members to make decisions.
71. PSB agendas and meetings are described as "dull", and there is a lack of enthusiasm overall about attendance. Some participants suggest the agendas are too heavily influenced by county council officers. PSB meetings are widely seen as an opportunity to share information between partners rather than acting as a strategic key decision making body. The meetings are not regarded as a good experience for junior officers to make presentations to, or attend.
72. Some participants have concerns that PSB meetings concentrate too much on operational detail and not enough attention or efforts are made about achieving high level cross cutting working. This is reflected for example in lengthy and wordy reports submitted for either decision or information, but also in the perception of officers who feel that PSB should take more time to debate issues and be prepared to challenge each other. There is widespread frustration that no one follows through with decisions, and there appears to be an expectation that partners will go away and deal with issues, but "nothing seems to happen."
73. There is some anxiety about the implementation of the governance review and that there is over reliance on depending on this to bring about significant change in how people work together, rather than focussing on improving leadership and changing behaviours, described by one commentator as "we need strong leadership, not tinkering with governance or structures". There are also concerns from those involved at thematic level, particularly from those involved in climate change that have concerns that the subject matter of the block has not been understood. The profile of climate change and environmental issues appears to be low relative to some of the other themes, and this is recognised by others outside of the block. There are concerns from those within the blocks that these issues will be lost if the move from 6 to 4 themes is implemented as part of the governance review.

74. There are also broader concerns about the filtering out of information and impact of issues and proposals, due to the multi layered approach of the decision making structures.
75. Linkages do not appear to be explored or exploited between the county wide Sustainable Community strategy and the district local strategic partnerships and local working, resulting in little apparent connection between these layers described as “a disconnected hierarchy”. This means that there are a whole range of views on priorities and no community inputs into the SCS. No linkages are apparent between the local LSPs and the PSB, and if linkages are made, they do not appear to be transparent or widely known about.
76. The overall approach to decision making at PSB is described by participants in deflated terms, as despite building agreement through working in the blocks, PSB is very process orientated and there is no debate or challenge on the issues involved. The lack of trust between partners at headline level results in a limited amount of challenge except of the county council’s performance.
77. That there is too much focus on process is a concern widely voiced by partners who describe processes as long winded. The volume and range of groups and partnerships is another impediment to progress which results in too much time and effort spent in servicing meetings and structures. There are too many partnership meetings to the extent that some participants feel that groups are created for their own sake and this results in duplication of debate and the officer time, as well as an opportunity cost of attending these meetings. Simplification of process would enable more time to be spent in delivering outcomes for local people.
78. Greater input of Board members and their chief officers is needed in planning the meeting agendas, in order to enable them to develop ownership of the business of the meetings, and to take some responsibility for the introduction of follow up actions, so that progress can be monitored.
79. Consideration should be given to whether the right people are on the Board, i.e., those empowered and able to make decisions at the meetings, and whether it is clear to those involved what the role of PSB is actually for. “It needs to be leaner, smarter and not just about money”. Others share concerns about the overly cautious approach and that board members want to take things away for discussion rather than make decisions.

Financial and resource capacity

Strengths

- The work of the Observatory is valued by partners

Areas for consideration

- All partners need to understand their responsibilities to contribute to the effectiveness of the partnership, whether in money or resources
 - Partners should be transparent about their financial challenges to encourage mutual understanding of individual pressures
80. The Observatory facility is widely used, and highly regarded as providing quality information. There are other good examples of the pooling of resources, e.g., joint funded posts on drug and alcohol action, shared data analysts, partnership funded PCOS posts and payroll services.
81. The partnership should consider the introduction of regular discussions about finances and resources into partnership working, particularly where there is not any new money being made available. Although there appears to be commitment for partners to work together, this is not reflected in a widespread pooling of resources. This is important if agreed priorities are to be delivered, as there are some concerns from participants that the PSB funds projects that are not agreed priorities.
82. In the current and future financial climate funding discussions are likely to be more difficult and will need to focus on bending existing mainstream budgets in order to support collective delivery. This could mean people working differently, or sharing of resources, such as facilities in a more imaginative and open way. Effective partnership working is not just about shifting money – it requires different attitudes and behaviours.
83. More dialogue about the individual pressures and drivers facing each partner organisation is needed, so that there is more understanding between partners. Some partners face more financial difficulties than others, and this in turn limits capacity to engage or deliver. Added to this are different expectations of central government departments about the performance of each individual partner, and some partners are subject to micro management. This results in some partners feeling that their pressures are not understood, and others feeling that they are not prepared to participate or contribute to partnership working, or that there is an aggressive stance being taken over funding.
84. LPSA reward grant monies of £10m were allocated to the PSB but some partners question the outcomes achieved with this funding. The distribution of LPSA funding to the LSP's on a broadly equal basis (although a higher allocation was made to Nuneaton and Bedworth), has also raised concerns about whether this is a mature enough approach to address local needs, because deprivation is not evenly distributed across the whole Warwickshire area. Achievement through the Narrowing the Gaps programme will require moving away from an "equitable" resource allocation to a needs-based approach. The police have moved resources around to target disadvantaged areas and this approach could be more widely explored at strategic level.
85. A fundamental issue is to clarify what partnership working means as it appears to be subject to a wide degree of variation across Warwickshire. At its best it is reflected in

service delivery recognised by local people, for example the way that public services worked together during the heavy winter snowfall is regarded as excellent. At its worst it is reflected in resistance to change, slow delivery and difficult relationships. The need for progress is widely recognised and will be heavily dependent on changed attitudes and behaviours, aptly described by one chief executive as the “need to increase the willingness of all partners (my own councillors included) to redirect resources to deliver cross cutting aims”.

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