

## The Stockport Partnership Board

**Report of:** Carol Morrison, Service Director (Communities)

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008

**Subject:** Stronger Communities Partnership – Proposed Remit and Scope

### PURPOSE

This report sets out a proposed broader remit and role for the Stronger Communities Partnership, on behalf of the Stockport Partnership Board, building on its current voluntary sector and community empowerment remit to include oversight of partner contributions to neighbourhood renewal activity.

### 1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Stronger Communities Partnership (SCP) has identified a number of issues which have a significant bearing on the future role and remit of the Partnership. The key issues are:

- **Sustainability of the Partnership** – the current remit aims to strengthening the role of the third sector in Stockport and develop robust community engagement mechanisms that are able to inform, and feed into, decision making processes across the Stockport Partnership. Whilst there is commitment from third sector partners to pursue this agenda, evidence would suggest that this remit alone is not enough to fully engage statutory partners on a sustainable basis. This means that the ability to influence change is limited. Members of the SCP feel that the Partnership can be neither effective nor sustained with its current remit.

- **Community Engagement** – the voluntary and community representatives, previously members of the Stockport Partnership Board (SPB), have a limited mandate to represent the wider community since the Voluntary and Community Sector Network ceased to exist. Evidence suggests that setting up engagement mechanisms for the sole purpose of informing debate within the Stockport Partnership Board is not sustainable in the long term. There is a need to build on community engagement mechanisms that are successful at the local level, and that seek the views of local people through area initiatives or on a specific topic.

- **Neighbourhood Renewal** – Currently each of Stockport's three Priority 1 Neighbourhood Renewal areas reports separately to the Stockport Partnership Board. Reports are also presented to the other thematic partnerships in order to gain commitment from partners on a specific Neighbourhood Renewal issue. Whilst the SPB provides strategic support to the Neighbourhood Renewal Teams, the fact that this work does not fall within the remit of any one partnership means there is no formal operational support or coordination of the work strands across the Stockport Partnership. Due to the obvious overlap with community engagement mechanisms informal support is currently provided through the SCP.

### 2.0 THRIVING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE THIRD SECTOR

2.1 Following the Local Government White Paper: Strong and Prosperous Communities, a wide range of further guidance has been produced on the need to develop the role of the third sector. The guidance aims to strengthen and expand the role of local voluntary and community organisations. Initiatives include asset management for community groups; providing a voice for under represented groups in campaigning for change; creating strong, active and

connected communities; and a range of support designed to put third sector organisations at the heart of the design and delivery of local public services.

- 2.2 To support this agenda National Indicator 7 has been developed to achieve an 'Environment for a thriving Third Sector'. The SCP has made a commitment to pursue this locally and there is a view that Stockport is well placed to achieve this, due to a number of successful local initiatives relating to community engagement and financial support processes already in place.

### **3.0 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**

- 3.1 Community empowerment is the process of enabling people to shape and choose the services they use, and influence the way those services are delivered. Community engagement is the actual technique of involving people in local decisions. The Local Government White Paper also encourages local partners; elected members; and the third sector to explore a number of new area based initiatives designed to improve community empowerment. These initiatives include the Community Call to Action, Parish Councils, and more Tenant Management opportunities.

- 3.2 Each of the following area based services have their own mechanisms for engaging the local community and enabling local people to help shape the design and delivery of local services:

- **Stockport Council's Area Committees**  
Covering eight wards and managing a small area based budget for local improvements.
- **Area Policing Teams**  
Four Neighbourhood Policing Teams reporting into the Area Committees and to the Safer Stockport Partnership
- **Children's Services Community Clusters**  
Six Community Clusters based on the existing school cluster areas reporting to both a local partnership for children and young people and the C&YP Strategic Partnership
- **Neighbourhood Health Teams**  
Eight area health teams based on the Area Committee wards, supported through health impact teams in the areas of greatest health need.
- **Neighbourhood Renewal Areas**  
Three Priority 1 Neighbourhood Renewal areas supported by local partnership structures designed to engage the local community and over see targeted activity
- **District Centre Partnerships**  
Eight District Centre partnerships exist across the borough to agree and oversee the implementation of local action plans. The Partnerships report to both the Area Committees and the Stockport Partnership Board.
- **Neighbourhood Housing**  
Three Housing Districts supported by: District Forums in each area; Tenants and Residents groups; and an umbrella Tenants Federation group.

- 3.3 Most of the engagement mechanisms outlined above tend to work in isolation from each other, with the Council's Area Committees often being the only common point of contact. The result is a fragmented approach to community engagement and often duplication. However, there is a need to build on this valuable and successful resource and develop effective mechanisms that engage local people in order to influence policy, and inform decision making, processes across the Stockport Partnership.

#### **4.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL**

- 4.1 Whilst the concept of Neighbourhood Renewal has been around for a while, there is a need to continue focusing on, and tackling, the multiple problems facing those living in the most disadvantaged areas. Recent legislation including the Working Neighbourhoods Fund, providing focused support to tackle worklessness, and Stockport's Local Area Agreement, which aims to close the gap between the most affluent and the most disadvantaged communities in Stockport, shows that Neighbourhood Renewal continues to be a high priority both nationally and locally.
- 4.2 For the LAA to be successful the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy must achieve its ambition of tackling the social, economic and environmental factors that contribute to improving local quality of life. However many of these issues are outside the direct control, or formal influence, of the Neighbourhood Renewal Team, often being managed through a relevant thematic partnership.
- 4.3 Clearly, the success of the Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) work depends on the ability to influence and inform the work of each of the thematic partnerships as well as the Stockport Partnership Board itself. This means championing the NR work at a strategic level as well as influencing services across a range of organisations on an operational level.

#### **5.0 PROPOSED REMIT FOR THE STRONGER COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP**

- 5.1 In view of the issues outlined above and the need to continue supporting and developing these areas of work it is proposed that the SCP offer on behalf of the SPB operational oversight of local activity on Neighbourhood Renewal and community empowerment. The Partnership would be ideally placed to provide the thematic 'home' and add value to these areas of work. It would also provide a mandate to monitor and coordinate the various work strands that are key to delivering inequalities targets within the LAA.
- 5.2 The SCP would also continue to provide a strategic home to further develop and support the role of the third sector.
- 5.3 Bringing together NR and community empowerment within the same partnership would ensure that marginalised individuals and communities increase their participation in decision making which affects their lives and overall well-being.
- 5.4 The SCP would work across all the thematic partnerships **on issues and activities contributing to social inclusion and community empowerment**. The new remit will cover the following 4 key strands of activity:
- Neighbourhood Renewal – directing and coordinating NR activity, supporting the role of NR across partnerships and highlighting blockages; overseeing the implementation of the NR Strategy and achievement of relevant NR targets agreed locally and through the LAA.
  - Community Engagement – mapping and building on existing local community engagement mechanisms to enable the views of local people to inform the work of the wider Stockport Partnership; making links between area based services; using the NR models and Area Committee pilot projects to help inform and develop area based services.
  - Developing the role of the third sector – rolling out the Stockport Compact across the Stockport Partnership, exploring the role the sector can play in transforming and delivering local public services, develop the skills of the sector to meet these new challenges, and overseeing actions that contribute to NI7 'Environment for a thriving Third Sector'.

- Identifying and coordinating responses to emerging social inclusion issues, for example fuel poverty and possible effects of the 'credit crunch'.

- 5.5 As the SCP would need to influence the work of other thematic partnerships in relation to social inclusion and contributions to neighbourhood renewal and reducing inequalities in priority areas it is recommended that its membership include a representative from:
- Relevant thematic partnerships, including the Housing Partnership;
  - key statutory partners including the PCT, NHS, Council and Police;
  - umbrella organisations representing the voluntary and community sector in Stockport; and
  - senior representatives from operational services key to achieving the relevant LAA targets.

- 5.6 Whilst the new Stockport Community Strategy and Neighborhood Renewal Strategy would provide a coherent framework to direct the bulk of the SCP's work, it is recommended that a small Working Group is set up to support the on going development and work load of the Partnership. The membership of the Working Group will include a representative responsible for:
- each of the work strands outlined in 5.4;
  - the LAA Stronger Communities block; and
  - work on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

The Working Group would meet 4 times per year timed to co-incide with the SCP meetings, in order to recommend agenda items, ensure agreed actions are implemented, and oversee performance against LAA and jointly agreed targets.

## 6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 **The Stockport Partnership Board is asked to consider and agree a refreshed remit and scope for the Stronger Communities Partnership, to accommodate oversight of neighbourhood renewal activity alongside its current role.**
- 6.2 **The Stockport Partnership Board is asked to endorse an augmentation of current membership of the Stronger Communities Partnership as set out in 5.5 to ensure partner ownership and effective oversight of the proposed remit.**