

17. Worcestershire Partnership Terms of Engagement for Statutory Partners

Purpose of report

1. To seek approval to the Worcestershire Partnership's Terms of Engagement for Statutory Partners in relation to the major budget pressures facing the public sector over the next 4-5 years, and to provide an update of the Worcestershire Total Place initiative.

Recommendations

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that:

- i) the Authority gives its formal approval to the terms of engagement for statutory partners, as agreed by the Worcestershire Partnership Board; and***
- ii) the Authority notes the progress and next steps for Worcestershire Partnership Total Place initiative.***

Background

2. At its meeting on 1 February 2010, the Worcestershire Partnership Board approved a set of terms of engagement for public sector agencies in recognition of the major budget pressures facing public sector organisations over the next 4-5 years. These terms of engagement set out a number of commitments to discuss major budget decisions with one another, to consider service redesign across organisational boundaries and to consult businesses, the third sector and other stakeholders where appropriate.
3. The review of Worcestershire Partnership's governance and accountability arrangements carried out during 2009 led to a recommendation that a partnership-based efficiency and cost reduction strategy should be developed. The terms of engagement are part of the response to this recommendation, alongside the leadership programme work of the Shenstone Group and the ongoing Total Place initiative.
4. The Authority is currently represented on the Shenstone Group by the Chief Fire Officer who will also now be attending the Worcestershire Partnership Board. Senior officers are also involved in the Total Place initiative.

Terms of Engagement for Statutory Partners

5. The full text of the Terms of Engagement agreed by public sector members of the Worcestershire Partnership is set out below. It highlights the commitments that partners are willing to make when considering major budget decisions and service redesign.

Worcestershire Partnership – Statutory Partners: Terms of Engagement

6. The public sector agencies in Worcestershire recognise that over the next 4-5 years, we will all face major budget pressures, requiring changes and sometimes reductions in services.

Our commitment is to:

- (i) Talk to each other before we make major budget decisions.
 - (ii) Protect critical services to the public and businesses as far as possible, by redesigning services across organisational boundaries and achieve savings by sharing strategies, resources and budgets.
 - (iii) Put the needs of local people and places ahead of bureaucratic needs.
 - (iv) Prevent the cumulative effect of decisions affecting some communities or groups in society disproportionately.
 - (v) Minimise adverse consequences for the local economy.
 - (vi) Engage with business and the third sector where appropriate, and jointly consult stakeholders before major decisions are made.
7. To deliver the aspirations in the Terms of Engagement, a new group is proposed - the Public Service Executives Group (PSEG). The Chief Fire Officer is currently involved in discussions with other county Chief Executives to agree the PSEG working arrangements.

Total Place – next steps

8. Members will be aware that Worcestershire is one of thirteen areas piloting the Total Place initiative designed to find new and more efficient ways to serve the public in the light of the economic downturn. The work is being carried out through the Worcestershire Partnership, with all public sector partners involved. Total Place has been examining three theme projects:
 - a. public sector estate – developing a public sector estate capable of delivering major revenue savings and capital receipts;
 - b. reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET); and
 - c. areas of highest need – improving outcomes in deprived and disadvantaged neighbourhoods through community empowerment and more joined up public services.
9. The Worcestershire Total Place report was published by the Treasury and the Department for Communities and Local Government on 26 March 2010. On 13 April 2010, the Chief Executive of the County Council reported to the Worcestershire Partnership Board, which agreed the next steps based on Government invitations to Worcestershire:
 - a. A Total Capital and Total Assets pathfinder;
 - b. Development of a public estate company or trust model; and

- c. 'Extended field trials' on:
 - i. regeneration and aligning housing strategies;
 - ii. tackling deprivation; and
 - iii. NEET project.
- 10. The Chief Executive's report also noted opportunities to contribute to Whitehall projects relating to leadership of place, accountability and governance, including building on Worcestershire's ideas for greater devolution of public expenditure and the strategic leadership role for the principal local authority.
- 11. The full Worcestershire Total Place report can be accessed at the following web link:

<http://www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk/cms/pdf/TP%20FINAL%20SUBMISSION%20V1%202%20pdf.pdf>

Summary and conclusions

- 12. The Terms of Engagement represent a major statement of principle by partner agencies to work together to minimise the impact of the major public expenditure pressures facing the county. Alongside this, the Total Place initiative provides a 'whole area' approach to public services aimed at delivering better services at less cost.
- 13. The Chief Fire Officer and senior management are fully involved in the arrangements for the proposed Public Service Executives Group and the ongoing development of the Total Place initiative. It is proposed that representation at the PSEG will be the Chief Fire Officer.

Corporate Considerations

- 14. A Business Impact Analysis form is attached at Appendix 1 to measure and address the proposals contained in this report. The form contains information on the potential resource implications, legal issues, strategic policy links, equality/ethical issues and risk management implications.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Business Impact Assessment

Background papers - None

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