

LEICESTERSHIRE STRATEGIC SENIOR OFFICERS' GROUP

2 JULY 2007

CIVIC ALLIANCE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

REPORT BY LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Group on the outcome of the Civic Alliance Demonstration Project and to make proposals for the development of a Civic Alliance Partnership in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Background

2. Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland was chosen by the National Offender Management Service as a national demonstration area for the development of a Civic Alliance partnership. The main aim of a Civic Alliance is to encourage local authorities to work with Probation, Prison and Youth Offending Services to help reduce re-offending and to enable offenders to become more integrated as constructive members of society. A further significant driver is the inclusion of a reducing re-offending indicator within Local Area Agreements from April 2007.
3. The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Community Safety Programme Board endorsed the proposals for the development of the Project at its meeting in September 2006 and has received further verbal updates at subsequent meetings. An inaugural conference to launch the Project was also held in November 2006.
4. The information provided in this report will also be considered by the Programme Board at its meeting on 26 June.

Project Outcomes

5. It is not claimed that through the work of the Demonstration Project we have established a fully functioning and effective Civic Alliance Partnership across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. What we have in the sub region, however, are strong partnership arrangements which will facilitate the development of an effective Civic Alliance and that in some respects we are only at the start of a journey towards such an Alliance.
6. With considerable help from PRCI Ltd, community safety consultants based in Leicester, the work of the Project has focussed on producing a national toolkit which can be used by local areas to develop their own Alliance. The development of the toolkit was underpinned by mapping of local partnership initiatives which help to reduce re-offending as well identifying examples of good practice from around the country.

7. The toolkit was launched by Baroness Scotland, Minister of State at the Home Office, at a national conference held in Leicester on the 14th June 2007 and can be accessed via the following web link::
www.lg-em.gov.uk/civicalliancetoolkit
8. It provides information and practical guidance towards developing a local Civic Alliance based on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland journey and is intended for all public service practitioners interested in developing the Civic Alliance locally. It is designed to help them understand what a Civic Alliance is, why the contribution of the public sector to tackling re-offending is so important to the effective rehabilitation and resettlement of offenders and what needs to be done to developing one locally. As well as an overarching summary of what needs to be done, it includes a number of more detailed tools such as the business case for reducing re-offending, case studies and good practice examples, possible governance structures and agency roles and responsibilities.
9. The Project Board has also given consideration as to how we can begin to make the Alliance more real within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and what steps are needed to take forward the development of a Civic Alliance locally.

Way Forward

10. It is proposed that the CSPB should provide the overarching governance arrangements and therefore have overall “ownership” of the sub-regional Civic Alliance. The CSPB already has a priority workstream of reducing re-offending by prolific and other priority offenders and reducing overall re-offending would be a natural extension.
11. However, to ensure that the right public and local authority services are at the table to address the key re-offending risk factors such as education, employment, drug and alcohol misuse, mental and physical health, housing, financial support and debt, support for children and families, a high level sub-regional Civic Alliance Partnership Board working on behalf of and reporting to the CSPB should be established to drive the development of the Alliance forward.
12. Membership of the sub-regional Civic Alliance Board would include relevant senior representatives from Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council, preferably with an appropriate LAA brief eg Children and Young People, Economic Development. District Councils would be each asked to nominate a Director level representative that would ensure a range of relevant District Council functions were included. Other agencies would need to include Probation, Prisons, PCTs and other NHS bodies, the LSC, Police.
13. Below the sub-regional level there would still be a need for the local authorities to localise the work of the Alliance through LSP and LAA

arrangements. Within Leicestershire, this may be through the Senior Strategic Officers Group, whilst in Leicester City this may be via the Safer Leicester Partnership Board.

14. The work of the Civic Alliance will need to be underpinned by a cohesive reducing re-offending strategy and so one of the first tasks of the proposed Civic Alliance Partnership Board will be to develop such a strategy.

Beacon Bid

15. Round 9 of the Beacon Scheme includes a new theme of reducing re-offending. The Beacon Scheme identifies excellence and innovation in local government and exists to share good practice so that 'best value' authorities can learn from each other and deliver high quality services to all. The Demonstration Project Board has been encouraged by NOMS to make an application for Beacon status, given what has been achieved through the work of the Demonstration Project.
16. Preliminary assessment has been made of the criteria and it is thought that we have sufficient evidence to make a credible bid. It is proposed that that Leicester City should be the lead authority in making the bid supported by the County Council and also Melton Borough Council and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council on behalf of the other local authorities in the county. The closing date for applications is 29th June.

Conclusions

17. The Demonstration Project has made significant progress in achieving its original objectives eg mapping existing local reducing re-offending initiatives, identifying examples of best practice locally and nationally, and producing a toolkit for national use. However, it has been less successful in securing the full engagement and support of all ten local authorities in the sub-region. We need to ensure that the Civic Alliance Partnership becomes more of a reality across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. SSOG is therefore asked to support in principle the measures to take the project forward locally outlined above. It is suggested that the current Demonstration Project Board should continue to act as a steering group to implement the proposals.

Recommendations

18. That SSOG notes the outcomes of the Civic Alliance Demonstration Project and supports the proposals for taking the development of a Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Civic Alliance as outlined in paragraphs 9-13 above.

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