

VALUE FOR MONEY

PARTNERSHIP WORKING MEETING FOR MARCH 2010

Background

As outlined in the case study 'Partnership Working', the annual meeting of Sussex Police Authority with leaders and chief executives of Sussex Local Authorities took place in November 2009 at Slaugham Manor. The theme for the meeting was 'Maintaining Public Confidence in a Challenging Financial Environment: A Shared Challenge for the Public Sector in Sussex'.

The Authority adding value

The Authority have agreed to build on the contributions made at the meeting by facilitating arrangements for representatives of the wide range of public bodies to share their planned capital programmes in order to identify opportunities to maximise community assets, whilst reducing the costs of providing essential public services.

As a direct outcome of this commitment, the Director of Resources, Mr Mark Baker, arranged an initial meeting with Sussex Fire and Rescue Services to discuss opportunities for cross services collaboration. The fact that only the Fire and Police Services were involved was not intended to exclude other partners, but it was considered that the small group was a more workable option initially to facilitate progress at an early stage. This meeting took place on 4 March 2010 at Slaugham Manor. The Authority was represented at this important meeting by the Chairman, Dr Laurie Bush.

The meeting considered four business areas:

- Buildings and facilities management
- Community and neighbourhood management
- Fleet and transport arrangements
- Training and development

The meeting involved frank and open discussions between the lead practitioners of these business areas from each of the contributing organisations. This then led to a combined session in the afternoon where feedback was provided from each group to the wider assembled meeting.

There was general agreement that each group would now act independently to consider possibilities and devise joint activities within their business areas for future joint working.

Of particular note was the emergence of an immediate agreement between interested parties within the Fleet and Transport section, to consider economies of scale in the procurement of a number of essential items. These include fuel, lubrication, tyres etc. There was also agreement about the delivery of some essential specialist services.

Other business areas had identified a number of opportunities for future investigation and development and it was agreed that these would be taken forward with some urgency.

The Chairman of the Authority addressed the issue of the requirement for an overriding governance structure to support the collaborative opportunities. The attendance of a representative of Sussex Police Authority enabled the consideration of their responsibilities for the control, monitoring and scrutiny of such arrangements in view of their ownership of many of the resources to be included in these arrangements.

As a direct result of Dr Bush's recommendation, a management board is now to be developed comprising lead and service members to facilitate the practical development of appropriate activities. There would also be an oversight board, comprising of chief executives and chairs, or their representatives, where final agreements and decisions for action would be agreed. This arrangement mirrors that adopted effectively by the South East Regional Collaboration Board of Police Forces in the South East for their collaborative activities.

Outcome

Building on from the momentum created by the Police Authority, this meeting was an excellent example of how the initiative of Sussex Police Authority has developed into agreement in principle that effective joint activity can be achieved to the benefit of all public bodies in meeting the challenge created by the financial circumstances within the public sector.

The agreements at this meeting are just one more step forward into including as many partners organisations as possible around Sussex and local authorities and councils will be invited to contribute at a very early stage in the near future. The Authority sees itself as occupying an ideal position as the primary local authority that pans across the whole county. This enables the Authority to be a key facilitator for change, involving as many local partner organisations as possible. This focus for value for money is key as we set the strategic direction for Sussex Police and other partner organisations around the county.

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