

Background

1. The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules state that all Scrutiny Boards will act as a “critical friend” to the relevant Strategic Partnership Board and consider and report on the following areas:
 - What contribution the Partnership Board is making to tackle poverty and inequality, and the progress being made against this
 - How successfully the Board’s partnership arrangements are working
 - To what extent are significant benefits being seen from partnership working? How has partnership working ensured increased pace of change to address the issue in hand?
2. A common approach was adopted by Scrutiny Boards in exercising their “critical friend” role, in order that outcomes could be compared and contrasted between Partnership Boards. However, it was also acknowledged that each Strategic Partnership Board is at a different stage in its development and maturity.
3. During March and April 2013, Scrutiny Boards received reports from the relevant Strategic Partnership Board and had the opportunity to question the chair and members of the Partnership Board and support officers.
4. It was agreed that, following the scrutiny sessions, each Scrutiny Board would produce a summary report of its findings. The Scrutiny Support Unit would then prepare a cover report drawing out any common threads and best practice emerging from the individual inquiry sessions. The full report will be presented to Council, as the commissioning body for this piece of scrutiny inquiry work. Each Strategic Partnership Board will also receive their respective individual report, along with the cover report, and will be requested to respond to any scrutiny recommendations in the normal manner.
5. The Scrutiny Board received a report and presentation on the history and development of the Sustainable Economy and Culture Strategic Partnership Board. Members were also presented with information to assist them in assessing strengths and areas for development for the Partnership Board in respect of the three key questions set out above.
6. The following representatives from the Sustainable Economy and Culture Strategic Partnership Board attended the Scrutiny Board’s meeting on 9th April 2013:
 - Nigel Foster, Chair of the Strategic Partnership Board
 - Councillor Richard Lewis, Executive Member, Development and the Economy
 - Councillor Adam Ogilvie, Executive Member, Leisure and Skills
 - Martin Farrington, Director of City Development
 - Peter Roberts, Principal, Leeds City College

The Scrutiny Board's observations and recommendations relating to the Sustainable Economy and Culture Strategic Partnership Board

Composition of the Board

7. We discussed the balance of Board membership between private, public and third sector. We noted that this is currently the only one of the strategic partnership Boards chaired by a non-councillor, but the Chair indicated that he did not believe that this was a particularly significant feature in terms of how the Board performed.
8. We were also told about the Board's impact beyond its specific membership, through individual members' reach within their own organisations and wider networks and spheres of influence. As an example of good practice, the Board produces a regular snapshot update of key messages that members use to keep a larger group of people informed about and engaged with the Board's work.
9. The Chair spoke of the full commitment of all Board members to work in partnership to achieve the best and most lasting outcomes and transformational change for the city. This was combined with an imperative to see the impact for all communities and every size of business within the city.
10. Whilst recognising the importance of keeping the Board's membership to a workable size, Scrutiny Board members commented on the current composition of the Partnership Board, which is not representative of the diversity of the local population. The Chair of the Partnership Board acknowledged the current position and agreed that this was an area for ongoing review. In so doing he made reference to another Board he belongs to which does have a more diverse make-up and the positive dimension that this brings to that Board's work.

Recommendation 1

That the Sustainable Economy and Culture Partnership gives consideration to the diversity and representativeness of its membership in relation to the population of Leeds when vacancies arise in its membership.

11. We also acknowledged that the balance of membership on the Board makes it ideally placed to take forward the principle of Civic Enterprise set out in the Commission for Local Government, particularly through encouraging businesses to become more civic, and the public and third sectors to become more enterprising.

Ways of working

12. The Chair emphasised his view of the Board's role as one of setting the strategic tone and direction rather than becoming involved in the detail of delivery.
13. We also heard that, for each of the Board's 3 priority areas of the Health Hub, low carbon city and skills, a member of the Board has put themselves forward to champion progress on behalf of the partnership .
14. We learned that the Board operates a performance steering group, and we sought reassurance that this was providing a useful focus for the Board's work, rather than creating duplication. We were assured that this is the case and that its role is to strengthen the accountability of the partnership to the council, the city and to the business community. This includes responsibility for overseeing the regular quarterly

performance reports on City Priority Plan progress that are presented to the Scrutiny Board as part of scrutiny's own accountability function for the city.

15. We acknowledged the links that the Partnership Board has made with other Partnership Boards in areas of mutual interest in order to ensure a joined up approach to achieving the vision for Leeds to be the best city in the UK, and also links to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and sub groups of the former Leeds Initiative. We value the importance of integrated working between the various strategic partnerships as key to overall city success.
16. We also acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension, through the City Deal for Employment and Skills and the West Yorkshire Transport Fund.
17. We welcomed Partnership Board members' commitment to ongoing engagement with the Scrutiny Board.

Progress

18. We appreciated the Board's development of the concept of a pipeline of transformational interventions. The Partnership Board has captured this in a simple table, which sets out short, medium and long term milestones to be achieved on each of the Board's key priorities over the lifetime of the City Vision to 2030. This high level checklist of transformational projects is a live document and is under constant review, so that the Board can continuously be engaged in identifying and shaping the next wave of potential opportunities and programmes to be championed.
19. Our own work over the year has reflected several of the same priorities as those of the partnership, most notably in our recent inquiry on the marketing and promotion of the city, focusing on what the city needs to do next in order to secure ongoing investment and growth. This is clearly a key area for the Partnership Board's consideration. We heard about the partnership's contribution to delivering successful schemes such as Trinity and the Arena, as well as in supporting and attracting future investment in the city. We also heard about, and strongly applaud, the focus on enabling local people to benefit from the employment opportunities that investment brings to the city.
20. As a particular example of the Partnership Board's contribution to tackling poverty and inequality in the city, we were very pleased to hear from Peter Roberts about the foundation of the Leeds Apprenticeship Training Agency. This is an employer-led approach to employment and skills, targeting small and medium-sized enterprises. We also heard about the complementary work being promoted by the Children's Trust Board in relation to work with NEET young people and the achievement of functional skills to promote access to employment.
21. In discussing the transport aspect of the partnership's agenda, we noted that NGT is only the starting point for the city's need to develop integrated transport

Next steps

22. We discussed the challenge for the Partnership Board to ensure that it continues to move forward on each of the three priority areas. In particular, given the long lead-in times for projects, regular stock-takes are useful to gauge progress and identify where new projects and schemes need to be brought forward. A lack of 'big ideas' now will mean a long wait for delivery on the ground.

23. We particularly noted that the Partnership Board has been reviewing its priorities and redefining them as 3 obsessions: maximising job growth; becoming a low carbon city; and enjoying an active and creative city. It is planned that the obsessions will be complemented by 2-5 'big ideas'. Board members have been discussing this concept recently and suggesting what the 'big ideas' might be. These included a strong focus on a campaign to create jobs in the city. We look forward to hearing the outcome of the Board's deliberations, and considering how this may influence our own work programme for the next year.
24. We were also pleased to hear about a commitment from the Board to promote better engagement between businesses, schools and young people. We agree that this is crucial to developing a local workforce with the required skills to fill the jobs that will be on offer in the city.
25. The Chair of the Board indicated that there also needs to be further effort to raise the profile of the city and its cultural offer. Leeds has a great range of cultural experiences to offer, but is consistently not perceived nationally as highly as that offer collectively merits.
26. The representatives of the Board also acknowledged that there had been less progress achieved against the priority to promote low carbon businesses, buildings, energy generation and connectivity across the city than for the other two priority areas. There is a need to identify more specific projects here that can help to achieve transformational change in relation to this priority, which will require strong partnership working across all sectors. District heating and integrated transport were particularly identified as areas requiring more progress to be made.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Strategic Partnership Board develops a clear plan for progressing the low carbon city priority area of work.

Conclusion

The Scrutiny Board would like to thank the Chair and members of the Sustainable Economy and Culture Strategic Partnership Board for their positive participation in this review.

We acknowledged that this is still a comparatively 'young' Board compared to some of the more established Strategic Partnership Boards, but we felt that it had made a positive start in tackling its broad ranging challenges, and that it has promising plans for the future.

The Scrutiny Board endorses the commitment to continuously prioritise the actions of the Partnership Board, and the focus on delivery of key projects which will contribute to the ambition to deliver the long-term vision for Leeds.

In particular we welcome the realistic assessment of both successes and challenges by the Partnership Board. We look forward to an ongoing accountability dialogue on further achievements and overcoming the challenges.