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Dudley LAA

Abstract

Historically, Dudley has not comprehensively integrated sustainable development principles at partnership level albeit there are some areas of good practice. However, sustainability is now a cross cutting theme for the next generation LAA in Dudley (NGLAA). The submission of Dudley's new LAA includes an explanation of the link between the LAA outcomes and 'Securing the Future's' four priorities for action.

The LSP, The Dudley Community Partnership (DCP), recognises its responsibility to address inequalities that exist within the Borough and to ensure no one is disadvantaged by virtue of where they live, and to improve the quality of life for all those who live or work in the Borough.

The issue

Dudley is an urban unitary authority. The Dudley Community Partnership (DCP) is the LSP for the area and defines its role as extending and improving partnership working within the Borough whilst ensuring that communities are actively involved in determining service delivery. It also states that it has a responsibility to address inequalities that exist within the Borough so as to ensure no one is disadvantaged by virtue of where they live, and to improve the quality of life for all those who live or work in the Borough.

Dudley's new three year LAA (2008 – 2011) is called the 'Next Generation LAA'.

Historically, Dudley has not comprehensively integrated sustainable development principles at partnership level albeit there are some areas of good practice. Whilst it has an environmental-sustainability focus within the Council (waste management, parks, biodiversity etc), the environmental strand of sustainability has not been obvious within partnership working until recently. The Next Generation LAA (NGLAA) has been an opportunity to address this through the inclusion of both the cross cutting sustainability theme, and through the environmentally aware communities theme. These developments are also now starting to influence the new Sustainable Community Strategy which is also being refreshed during 2008.

The key elements of the cross-cutting sustainability theme are:

- that the potential sustainability of the agreement is to be considered across the LAA and its delivery plans;
- that a set of priorities and actions within one element of the agreement does not create further problems in another; and
- that the outcomes of the New Generation LAA make a positive contribution to the future of the Borough and wider a field so consideration must be taken of its impact upon the longer term, upon diverse and sometimes minority communities, and upon the environment.

What Dudley did

The lead individuals/organisations in this have been the coordinator of the Strategic Housing and Environment Partnership (SHEP) the SHEP group itself and the DCP executive.

The cross cutting theme of sustainability will be implemented predominately through three mechanisms:

- each task and finish group addressing issues of sustainability in the development of their individual delivery plans;
- the peer review process of delivery plans assessing the sustainability of them against a framework of questions based upon the Regional Sustainable Development framework; and
- addressing the collective sustainability of the agreement through an appraisal process together with the review of the Sustainable Community Strategy later in early 2009.

In addition to the cross cutting sustainability theme, community-focussed and physical environment issues have been included in an “Environmentally aware communities” priority theme. This section makes the links between poor quality environmental factors and both the local economy and the perception that people have of the area, and includes issues around housing and transport. The theme also focuses upon climate change, and progress will be measured nationally by the national per capita CO₂ indicator however, local measures are being developed to track local success and milestones.

The impact

The high level priority outcome areas in the LAA are:

- wealthy communities;
- healthy communities;
- environmentally-aware communities; and
- safe and cohesive communities

The cross cutting principles are:

- equalities;
- sustainability; and
- children and young people.

Leadership

Leadership for the sustainability cross cutting theme and for the environmentally aware communities block within the LAA is from the SHEP group, supported by a LA coordinator with a sustainability background.

Skills and competencies

The DCP Board have committed to undertaking a development programme which is being facilitated through the ‘Learning to Deliver’ programme. This includes the use of a self assessment tool which the partnership can use to enable it to test itself against a set of agreed competency statements. An Improvement Plan will then help focus on one or two key improvements judged to be vital to more

effective service delivery. The Partnership has also provided Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) training to all partners involved in the planning and delivery of the LAA to ensure that EIA is embedded in service delivery. Furthermore, the Partnership has subscribed to Carbon Free TV, which is accessible via it's website and those of partners, and gives key messages about what individuals can do day-to-day to reduce their impact on the environment.

Tools

The DCP used a set of criteria to refine and prioritise issues as part of the development of their second submission of the NGLAA. The criteria are laid out below:

- Is there clear evidence that the priority is a problem within Dudley particularly in comparison to (sub) regional and national performance and/or family groups?
- Would the priority require a partnership approach to achieve solution?
- By tackling the issue will it have a significant impact on quality of life issues to the community?
- Would the partnership be able to identify improvement with the three year timescale of the agreement?
- Will inclusion help bring about transformational change?
- Will it have a clear link to improving economic prosperity?
- Will it have an impact on narrowing the gap?
- Is it a cross cutting issue or does it have an impact on the other themes and priorities?
- Does it accord with residents views?
- Would it be possible to redirect resources to bring further improvement?

These criteria support integration of sustainability through the focus on: impact on quality of life; transformational change; the links to other priorities and the focus on cross cutting nature of issues.

In addition, a sustainability appraisal process will be used through the delivery planning process, through the Task and Finish Groups. This appraisal will make use of either the regional or local sustainability principles.

External factors

The new national indicator set, and the focus on sustainability and inclusion of climate change indicators has raised the profile of both sustainability and of climate change locally, and provided an illustration that Government is taking the issues seriously and requires LAs and LSPs to do the same. Before the indicator set was published, the plethora of guidance did not do much to raise the profile of sustainability, rather it confused the picture.

Lessons

The SHEP group have recognised the need to have a sustainability and climate change champion on the DCP Board. Whilst there is currently no DCP Board member with an explicit sustainability role, there are plans for a voluntary and community sector representative to take this role.

Those involved also highlighted the need for some form of coordination and signposting for the range of guidance available.

Data / evidence

A wealth of local data already exists within Dudley and the task of SHEP is to bring it all together in a partnership arena. The support of Government Office sustainability and climate change officers has been valuable in developing the new LAA and have brought a perspective on what other partnerships are doing. Officers and involved individuals within Dudley are linked in to the regional sustainability practitioners network which is becoming more important and recognised following the emergence of the national indicator set.

Further information

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