



UPDATE TO THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Including the
Annual Report 2007/08 and
Business Plan 2008/10



Festival of Culture.



Health Inclusion Programme.



Sloppy Slippers.

Contents

P3. **Part One:** Executive Summary

P4. **Part Two:** Structure of the Partnership

P6. **Part Three:** Past Achievements

P8. **Part Four:** Case Studies

P10. **Part Five:** A Vision for the Future

This update to the West Suffolk Community Strategy published July 2006, updates the actions taken to implement the strategy over the last two years. A number of changes to our governance have been made and a number of new priorities have been developed during that time and all these are outlined.

PART ONE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership (WSLSP) comprises the district council area of Forest Heath, the borough council area of St Edmundsbury and the western part of the district of Babergh. These Councils started to meet in 2001 to look at ways of working together and this group later added other statutory and voluntary agencies to form the WSLSP in 2002. The original aims were to respond to Government policy and produce a Community Strategy, make better use of resources and bring together expertise and experience. Our record on this is described in part three.

This is our second Business Plan but the first one to be combined with an Annual Report, and the following summarises our governance and structure, our achievements of the past and our plans for the future.

Part two

Describes the governance and structure of the Partnership, which comprises an Executive Board, the Community Strategy Steering Group, the Annual Conference and Forum, and several Action Groups.

Part three

Sets out the achievements of the past:

- Published a second Community Strategy
- Completed a Community Profile
- Reviewed the Partnership's governance
- Produced a Communications Strategy
- Organised a workshop on community cohesion
- Organised a workshop on climate change
- Developed an Action Plan to deliver the cross-cutting initiatives
- Distributed funds to 16 organisations from our Community Chest
- Staged our First Annual Conference

Part four

Describes four case studies that illustrate some of the work the WSLSP has actioned towards making life better in West Suffolk.

Part five

Sets out the WSLSP programme for the next two years to March 2010, which is:

- Continuing to build the Partnership into an organisation able to plan services and take action to benefit the community
- Implementing the Community Strategy
- Evaluating the benefits of the Action Plan 2007/09 against the five outcomes
- Developing our Action Groups and implementing the priorities from the Annual Conference
- Developing an Action Plan to reduce climate change
- Developing a Community Engagement Strategy
- Working with all our partners to assist in the delivery of the LAA targets
- Seeking funds to extend our project work
- Developing the Communications Strategy

PART TWO: STRUCTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

A brief history of the WSLSP

The West Suffolk Better Governance Group was set-up in January 1999 with the purpose of introducing community planning for West Suffolk. It included representatives from Forest Heath District Council, St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Suffolk County Council, Police, Health, Voluntary Sector, Business and Education/Employment Agencies. With the process of modernisation and Government's focus on creating Community Strategies through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), the group had begun meeting on a monthly basis to make progress in accordance with the guidelines. In 2002 Babergh District Council indicated that they wished for its western area to become part of the emerging Western Suffolk LSP, which was formally established in Spring 2002 and work began on creating a Community Strategy.

Structure

Executive Board

The Executive Board consists of the following partners:

- Forest Heath District Council
- St Edmundsbury Borough Council
- Babergh District Council
- Suffolk County Council
- NHS Suffolk
- Suffolk Police Authority
- Western Area Suffolk Constabulary
- West Suffolk College
- West Suffolk Consortium for Voluntary Organisations
- Suffolk Learning and Skills Council
- Suffolk Association of Local Councils
- 2 Representatives from Business
- 3 Representatives from the Voluntary Sector

This group is the Executive Board of the Partnership and is the final decision making body on all issues. Representatives include elected members and officers. They meet quarterly in public.

A full list of board and steering group members is available on the website.

Community Strategy Steering Group Members are drawn from:

- Forest Heath District Council
- St Edmundsbury Borough Council
- Babergh District Council
- Suffolk County Council
- NHS Suffolk
- West Suffolk Consortium for Voluntary Organisations
- The Environment Agency
- West Suffolk College
- Western Area Suffolk Constabulary
- Federation of Small Businesses

This group is the main working and delivery group of the Partnership and makes recommendations to the Board for action. They meet monthly.

Health Inequalities Network

This group has brought together all the agencies involved in delivering public health services, and identifies the places where access to healthcare as identified in the Community Profile is lower than other areas. It also plans and implements new accessible health provision, in those areas to assist greater use and encourage good health among the whole population. The group obtained funding to set up the Fuel Poverty scheme.

Action Groups

Action Groups have been set up to implement some of the projects commissioned. These are Respect Alcohol, Respect Yourself; Getting Western Suffolk Active; Fuel Poverty; Sloppy Slippers; and Guide to Services. During the coming year new sub-groups will be set up for Mental Health, Rural Issues, Children and Young People, Bridging the Skills Gap, and Changing Needs of Communities.

Annual Conference and Forum

The Annual Conference and Forum is made up of any organisation or individual working or living in West Suffolk and/or with an interest in improving the quality of life in West Suffolk. It is an open meeting and everyone can participate. The purpose of the Conference and Forum is to engage the community and to discuss and guide the CSSG and Board in the needs of local people and the solutions for implementation. The annual conference and forum bring together organisations and individuals from across West Suffolk. The Forum took the first steps to producing the second Community Strategy, and both the Forum and the Annual Conference contribute to the delivery of the Community Strategy. The annual conference held on 28 November 2007, recommended the priorities for the future which have been stated earlier in the plan.



The West Suffolk LSP area.

PART THREE:

PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

The WSLSP has had much success in bringing together people and expertise, by producing a second Community Strategy in August 2006, identifying local need through the Forum, and the Community Profile. The Partnership secured some achievements of which it can be proud, and these are highlighted in the following section:

3.1 Production of a second Community Strategy

The Strategy's objectives are to:

- Maximise the potential of all children and young people.
- Develop and maintain a safe, strong and sustainable community.
- Create and support healthier communities.
- Develop a prosperous and sustainable economy.

The Partnership has agreed eight strategic priorities. These are issues which the partnership feels are the most important to our communities and where real improvements can be made. The eight priorities will be the main focus of the Partnership's work. These are to:

- Encourage achievement in children and young people.
- Make West Suffolk a safer place and build a stronger community.
- Protect our natural and built environment and local biodiversity, and ensure sustainable development.
- Reduce avoidable early deaths by providing education and support on health and wellbeing.
- Alleviate poverty and reduce health inequalities.
- Enable a prosperous, sustainable economy.
- Encourage sustainable tourism.
- Improve skills and learning opportunities.

3.2 Community Profile

To help to implement the Community Strategy and direct resources to the most important services we produced a community profile in April 2007. This included information and statistics on 'people and places', 'economic well-being', 'health and social well-being', 'education and lifelong learning' and 'community safety'. The profile also identified specific geographical areas of need as well as gaps in provision of services.

3.3 Reviewed the Partnership's Governance

In order to make the WSLSP more effective in seeking views, consultation and action it was essential to provide the mechanism for this to happen. After organising seven meetings of the Forum in two years it was decided that it was not an effective way of working and communicating with the community. A long process was implemented to look at alternatives and it was agreed that there should be an Annual Conference, plus one general Forum and a workshop on a specific issue. We also decided to set up action groups to develop our priorities and these are currently being established.

3.4 Communications Strategy

A Communications Strategy was produced as a result of which we appointed a Communications Officer and she has been very active in communicating with a large number of groups and organisations. A large number of press contacts have been made and press releases issued. The website has been redesigned and a lot more information is now on the website, than previously.

3.5 Workshop on Community Cohesion

A workshop on community cohesion was held in 2007 to look at all aspects of the issue. We established a definition and the existing provision and identified some priorities for future action. These priorities are being examined to identify those which the Partnership can develop, under our changing needs of communities programme.

3.6 Action Plan and Cross Cutting initiatives

We were able to commission projects to contribute towards the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreements (LAA) targets. We commissioned a number of projects which addressed alcohol harm reduction, bridging the skills gap, changing needs of communities, and encouraging physical activity. In total £395,000 of support was provided to the four project areas. This commissioning came after a bidding process was devised to find the best Partnerships to carry out the work we required. We also contributed £209,000 towards the achievement of some LAA targets by contributing funding towards addressing child obesity, helping to reduce serious and fatal car accidents, helping schools achieve higher attainment levels for Key Stage 2 and university entrance, and helping to reduce the factors contributing to low weight babies. Details of all these initiatives and progress on our Action Plan can be viewed on our website. Some of our case studies from these initiatives are shown on pages 8 and 9.

3.7 Community Chest

A total of £24,621 was allocated to a fund to enable Voluntary and Community Organisations and Parish and Town Councils to apply for a small grant towards a project they wished to carry out. An open bidding process was implemented to ensure transparency and fairness. An application form and criteria were established and 38 applications were received. An assessment process was devised and, with the help of a group of people appointed by the Forum, 16 organisations were successful in obtaining a grant. A list of these can be seen on the website.

3.8 First Annual Conference

The first Annual Conference was held on 28 November 2007, and 100 people attended. Elections for three voluntary and community sector representatives to join the WSLSP Board were held, and the results announced. Delegates were consulted on a number of issues including how the Forum would operate in the future, and to set priorities for the WSLSP to implement and achieve in the future.

3.9 Leadership Project

A Leadership Programme has been completed which helped partners define their role and work towards greater Partnership working. The programme was intended to

- achieve clarity on how partnership working can be achieved and implemented,
- develop behaviours that support culture change, based on trust,
- increase innovation and problem solving approaches, and
- increase cross-agency working and joint initiatives.

The programme has produced an increase in innovative and creative problem-solving approaches, rooted in a customer perspective, in order to continually improve service delivery.

PART FOUR: CASE STUDIES

One man's journey to find himself and beat the bottle

West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership has funded a course called 'Think Smart Drink Smart' to help people beat alcohol dependency. The course is run by West Suffolk Mind and helps people examine their own relationship with alcohol and decide what they want to do about it.

Bill* from Bury St Edmunds was one of the participants in the pilot group for the course and this is his story.

"My problem started over 40 years ago when I was about 20 years old.

I went into the Royal Navy where alcohol was easily available, drinking was socially acceptable and 'celebrating' could mean accepting more than one Petty Officer's offer of his rum ration. Work suffered and when alcohol began to get in the way of functioning properly my naval career slid under the table.

Building a new career was demanding and my wife and I could regularly put away 3 lots of 1.5 litre flagons of cider before dinner. Mornings were characterised by a thick head and my marriage eventually broke down.

I continued drinking heavily and later developed cancer which was attributed to my heavy drinking and smoking. I also developed depression and was on Prozac.

My second wife was the one who saved me. She saw an advert in a local paper for the 'Think Smart Drink Smart' course, showed it to me and asked what I thought. This was a real turning point. The course was quite exceptional. It was very professionally run but had warmth and compassion and, although everyone in the group was very different, we formed an incredibly strong bond and they are still in my mind now. We all had different backgrounds, different problems and different reasons for drinking but the course helped us examine what alcohol means to each of us and why we drink and made us aware of what we were doing. We went to 7 sessions, one a week, and over time I regained my self-esteem and my control over my drinking.

The good thing about the course is they don't judge you or tell you can never touch a drop of alcohol again. It's more about being aware of what you are doing when

you are drinking and making your own decisions about whether you really need a drink and when you have had enough. It didn't feel a chore to go; in fact, I looked forward to the sessions as they helped me find answers. To find them we had to commit ourselves, be honest and work hard.

Now I know that it can be a normal day for me not to have a drink and I am in control – not the alcohol. I am now more contented and I know who and what I am – I have a sort of inner strength I didn't have before.

What do you say to someone who gave you your life back? Thank you West Suffolk Mind and the West Suffolk LSP for outstanding professionalism and care. Your way works."

**Name changed to protect the individual's identity*

Keeping warm for winter

Many older residents across West Suffolk suffer in silence each winter as their homes are cold but they can't afford extra heating and they think that extra insulation would be too costly. One of the projects the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership has been working on is raising awareness of affordable warmth amongst our older residents and helping them find out about free insulation.

As part of the project, the LSP has funded a special helpline for people to ring for advice. They have also run a programme of awareness training for home visitors (such as district nurses) so that they can refer vulnerable elderly households for help and they have been publicising the scheme through leaflets, local magazines and papers.

Mr and Mrs Palmer* from Brandon are one of the couples who have benefited. Here is their story.

"We had to call a plumber out for some repairs to our taps this winter and when he came round we got chatting about the weather and how hard it was to keep the house warm. He had heard about some of

these grant schemes and told me to ring the council and they gave us the special helpline number to call.

The lady we were put through to was really helpful and sorted out the best way



for us to get free loft insulation. Before we knew it the contractors were round doing the work and getting it all installed. We've already begun to feel the benefit and they said our bills should be cheaper now too.

We're really grateful to the LSP and everyone who has helped. Having just one phone number to ring to sort all this out has really taken the worry out of it and to find out that we could get extra insulation for free was a great surprise! We're not worrying about the weather now this winter and we are telling as many of our friends as possible so that they can get help too."

**Name changed to protect the individual's identity*

How we care for young carers

Young carers often spend their time looking after other family members and have little time for a real childhood themselves.

West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership has been working with Suffolk Carers to support young people in rural areas of West Suffolk who have to care for relatives or other adults with alcohol problems. We have provided funding to help them feel less isolated through setting up friendship support groups and social clubs, offering one-to-one support and organising residential short breaks. Suffolk Young Carers also offers advice and practical help and our funding has helped them raise awareness in schools so that other young carers can come forward and we can help support them too.

Sam* lives near Bury St Edmunds and his mother is an alcoholic and he has helped care for her and his younger sister. This is his story.

"I think I was about 7 years old when I started caring for my mum and looking after my little sister who was about 4. My mum has an alcohol problem and most of the time she was either drunk, still drinking or had a hangover so she wasn't able to do much. We'd get up in the morning and ask for some breakfast but she would tell us we had to get something ourselves. Because I was quite small then the only thing I could reach was the biscuit tin, so I'd just get some biscuits for me and my sister for our breakfast and lunch. We didn't get a proper meal until my dad came home from work in the evening about 8 or 9 o'clock.

Because mum couldn't really look after us, I had to care for my sister and keep her occupied. I also had to look after mum and keep her out of risk because she was very clumsy. I did what I could to help round the house and I often had to get things for mum because she couldn't get up.

Mum could be quite violent because of drinking and sometimes when she started

shouting or screaming I would get annoyed with her and try to push her back into her room. We had the police come round quite a lot and she was done for drink driving as well. Because she spent so much on alcohol we were flat broke so we had to be really careful with money and dad had to go out to work long hours.

Dad found out about Young Carers about a year ago and they've been really helpful. I go to their social club in Bury St Edmunds once a month and it's kind of like a youth club but everyone there is in the same situation so they understand. It's a mixture of ages – some adult helpers we can talk to and teenagers and big kids and some like me or younger. Sometimes before I used to feel different and feel a bit self conscious about it but it's good to have some friends now who know what you're talking about. I've started talking to some of my close mates at school about it now too so they know and the teachers know because sometimes I couldn't get my homework done in time so they gave me some slack.

The social club is really good. You can just have a break and have some fun and chill out. You can sit down and relax or

play games or chat. Sometimes they take us to the cinema or we've been canoeing or done archery and stuff. I've been on an overnight break as well with 4 other kids where we talked about our experiences and how we felt and how we coped and we learnt more about why people drink and how they start to recover. We did some fun things as well while we were away like going on a high ropes course which was cool.

Mum's not living with us at the moment. She's living in a flat and doing a recovery programme to get better. We go to visit her but she can be over emotional sometimes which can be a bit hard. Dad's at home with us full time now and we're on benefits because he doesn't work anymore because he has to look after us, but it's better to have him at home and we get proper meals and everything now.

The Young Carers have really helped me and hopefully mum will get better again soon. I want other people to know about Young Carers so they can get help if they need it too."

**Name changed to protect the individual's identity*

Getting people fitter and healthier

We all know that getting fit is important for our health yet many of us find the gym daunting and even more so if you have a disability. The West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership has supported a Health Inclusion Programme (HIP) in partnership with the disabled charity Optua to get people with disabilities back into fitness with a specially tailored personal training programme.

29-year old James from Sudbury is a perfect ambassador for the scheme. Born with cerebral palsy, he can walk with crutches but had been spending more time in a wheelchair. This is his story.

"I've been amazed at the results I've been getting since starting the programme. As I'm building up my strength, I'm finding I don't get as much pain in my lower back and I've noticed some improvement when walking with my crutches. I used to be able to walk unaided and my goal is to be able to walk round Sudbury town centre without crutches and without having to hold on to things.



The staff at the gym have been very friendly and supportive. After six weeks of being on the programme I even began exercising on the treadmill and have been increasing the speed I can walk. Within a couple of weeks of that I was already walking straighter and more upright and no longer dragging my feet.

I would recommend the programme to anyone with a disability whether they want to work on a certain area, improve their strength or just get fit. I'm already much stronger and more able to use the equipment on my own so I'm determined to reach my goal and make sure I keep fit for life."

PART FIVE: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

WSLSP MISSION

To improve the quality of life and make life better for all residents of West Suffolk.

FUTURE AIMS

- **Continuing to build the Partnership into an organisation able to plan services and take action to benefit the community**

The WSLSP has been very successful in building and developing the partnership and this will continue in the future. We intend to build on the Leadership project described in Part Three with more leadership seminars for all Board and Community Strategy Steering Group members.

- **Implementing the Community Strategy**

For the projects from the four cross-cutting initiatives, (alcohol harm reduction, bridging the skills gap, changing needs of communities, and Getting Western Suffolk Active), we produced an Action Plan with measures, targets and timescales. These were set over two years from April 2007. The Action Plan can be accessed on our website. We intend to achieve all the targets by March 2009. A seminar on community cohesion was held on 30 May 2007 and suggested some priorities, which will be considered for action over the life of the plan.

- **Evaluating the benefits of the Action Plan 2007/09 against the five outcomes**

A Performance Management system is in place to monitor the achievement of targets in the Action Plan which are updated quarterly. The Performance Management Report can be seen on our website. During the coming year we will be monitoring and assessing the 'added value' of our projects and how they have developed Partnerships for the greater benefit of the people of West Suffolk.

- **Developing our Action Groups and implementing the priorities from the Annual Conference**

The annual conference held in November 2007 set the WSLSP a huge programme for the future, with a number of priorities identified for further action. We will be setting up a number of Action Groups to develop new work to achieve those priorities.

- **Developing an Action Plan to reduce climate change**

The workshop on climate change held on 14 March 2008 set a number of targets to be achieved and we intend to create an Action Plan for all our partners to pledge commitment and actions they will take to achieve the targets. We intend to achieve those targets within the life of this plan. Work on the plan was commenced at the forum meeting on 11 June.

- **Developing a Community Engagement Strategy**

Community Engagement is a very important issue for all LSPs and it is intended to develop a strategy to be implemented over the next two years.

- **Working with all our partners to assist in the delivery of the LAA targets**

We are committed to assisting in the achievement of the Local Area Agreement targets which are relevant to our priorities. These are Suffolk wide targets and were agreed in June 2008 to cover a three year period.

- **Seeking funds to extend our project work**

We have received a further distribution of funds from the Performance Reward Grant totalling £79,185, which will be used to develop our new priorities as identified at the annual conference.

- **Developing the Communications Strategy**

A Communications Strategy was produced which recommended a number of initiatives. The initiative to increase publicity through press releases and media coverage is being implemented. We have also produced an e-newsletter which is distributed to organisations and interested parties as well as being available on the website. It is intended that the rest of the strategy is developed during the coming year.



Keeping West Suffolk Active.



Put A Cork In It.



WEST SUFFOLK LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

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