



Notes from the CCEN Seminar: A Vision of the LSP

14th December 1:15 – 3:15pm

The session started with attendees briefly introducing themselves, followed by a short PowerPoint presentation explaining the background behind the LSP and its current roles and functions.

The following notes were taken from the discussion that followed:

Concerns:

- The new structure looks similar to the old in terms of function, but wants to do everything it did before by making it smaller and with less support. How is this possible?
- Current structure of LSP doesn't require much servicing, simply takes up 2 hours of people's time and only meets 6 times a year. Currently this is the only avenue to bring all the different community heads around the table in one place to keep everyone informed about what's happening in the borough.
- Worried about behind-the scene agendas e.g. do the local authority *want* to work in partnership or is it preferable in some instances to continue working in silos?
- If LSP shrinks, how far will the new structure be able to implement VCS ideas?
- LSP has worked hard over the last few years to achieve good outcomes in the borough. Danger of regression if this is not preserved.
- Need an avenue to exchange information. Frustration exists at the current lack of engagement within the VCS e.g. neighbourhood forums.
- Localism- concerns about lack of resources and expertise- need capacity to deliver
- Erosion of rights- overview/democratic process
- Lack of duty and responsibility
- Private sector sitting in the background. Will they end up managing VCS??
- What happens if partnerships demonstrating best practice subsequently leads to further cuts?

In relation to Joint Strategic Needs Assessments/Neighbourhood Plans:

- Previous assessments of local community needs lacked substance
- Where no funding relationships exist, council may not even be aware of certain groups in the borough. This could lead to 'unknown' organisations being left-out of decision-making processes.
- If neighbourhood plans are to exist they need to have a strategic overview

Opportunities:

- VCS should capitalize on the potential that exists when statutory obligations are removed from some partners
- To avoid working in silos there needs to be an internal strategic overview within the local authority to identify cross-cutting themes

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- Where you have small neighbourhood groups you need a strategic overview within the borough to map what's happening and avoid groups pitting against each other, duplication of services etc.
- Local Authority (LA) need to know more than ever about what organisations are out there and what they are doing. VCS in the best position to obtain/relate this information.
- Central government taking away the power for LA to engage with the voluntary sector- is there room for VCS to fill the gap? E.g. CCEN to feed back information?
- Need to change the perception of how the VCS is viewed- start to look at VCS as being a significant power between communities and government therefore strengthening strategic partnerships.
- Future LSP/strategic group could facilitate stronger link with area forums and identify cross-cutting themes
- Need to empower people to engage
- Retain community strategy and local area agreements

Consensus

- Important to keep a partner board
- Should have a more important, stronger role
- Identify cross-cutting themes
- Should continue to raise the profile of VCS with stakeholders
- Important to share skills and knowledge regarding the added value of the sector and subsequent impact this has.
- VCS should take a more proactive role in ensuring the LA is aware of VCS impact and cost-savings involved.
- Respond to needs in light of changing landscapes. Any long-term strategic planning needs to take changing landscapes into consideration. Could be linked into neighbourhood plans
- VCS in a better position to respond and adapt to changing landscapes.
- Increased role of CCEN to relate and report on VCS activity (if within its capacity?)
- VCS should develop a stronger voice.
- Need balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches. Need community heads but need information from the ground as well
- System to measure the impact of partnership working