People, Plans and Partnerships

A National Evaluation of Community Strategies in Wales

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Chapter 1   Background and Public Policy Focus

Introduction

1.1   This chapter briefly sets out the broad parameters of the prevailing public policy framework in the UK and Wales, and focuses on national government's expectations in relation to the preparation of community strategies. It is divided into three sections as follows:

- UK Public Policy and the Modernisation Agenda:
- Public Policy and Governance in Wales: this outlines the main characteristics of governance in Wales, particularly in relation to devolved national government.
- Community Strategies in Focus: this examines the government guidance on the preparation of community strategies and reflects on some of its inherent challenges.

The UK Policy Context

1.2   The duty placed on local authorities in England and Wales by Section 4(1) of the Local Government Act 2000 is one concrete outcome of the extended debate that has taken place over a number of years concerning the identification of the basic role(s) of local government. The debate can be traced back at least as far as the 1969 Redcliffe Maud report on local government reform and the consequent 1972 Bains Report that stated:

"Local government in our view, is not limited to the narrow provision of a series of services to the community …It has within its purview the overall economic, cultural and physical well-being of the Community." (Bains, 1972)

1.3   By the 1980s terms such as 'the enabling council' (Clarke and Stewart, 1988) and 'the Competitive Council' (Audit Commission, 1988) emerged as constructs for exploring and defining the fundamental roles and orientations of local authorities and for determining the consequential political and managerial processes and structures that were required. During the 1990s the concepts of 'community government', 'community governance' and 'community leadership' became increasingly used with the last of these terms becoming a key concept within the 1998 White Paper, 'Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People':

"Community leadership is at the heart of the role of modern local government. Councils are the organisations best placed to take a comprehensive overview of the needs and priorities of their local areas and communities and lead the work to meet those needs and priorities in the round" (DETR: 1988, para. 8.1)

1.4   The intention stated in the White Paper was to introduce legislation to place a duty on councils to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and to strengthen council's powers to enter into partnerships - a duty that was intended to 'enshrine in law the role of the council as the elected leader of its local community' (op cit para 8.10). However, it was only as a result of lobbying by the English and Welsh local government associations that this intent eventually became the basis of Part 1 of the 2000 Act in the form of both a duty to produce community strategies and a discretionary power to promote well-being.

The Emergence of Community Strategies

1.5   The direct starting point for what eventually became 'community strategies' was the reference to the term 'community planning' in a consultative version of the Labour Party's policy statement on local government, 'renewing democracy, rebuilding communities', in 1995. It was suggested that local authorities should publish an 'annual community plan' which would:

"Set out in clear terms the council's objectives and priorities for each service and establish the performance targets which would need to be met. Councils would publish the plan and be required to consult people generally and the users of specific services, spelling out the targets and cost implications for local people."

1.6   This proposal drew on the statutory duty that had been placed on local authorities in New Zealand as part of the radical reforms of the public sector generally - reforms that had stimulated much interest in the UK. However, in the final published version of 'renewing democracy, rebuilding communities' the term 'community plan' had been replaced by 'performance plan'. This then became the basis for the first major legislative change of local government by the Labour Government that came to power in 1997 - the duty of best value. It was this duty that was at the core of the Government's attempt to reform local government from 1997 until the passing of the Local Government Act 2000.

1.7   While best value dominated, the concept of community planning did not entirely die away. Later in 1995 Labour controlled councils were invited to put themselves forward as pilots in a project that was intended to explore and develop the concept of community planning. 15 authorities participated in the project but, because of lack of clarity of what was meant by the term, the initiatives undertaken were extremely variable. At the same time the concepts of community leadership and community planning were being developed by organisations such as the Local Government Management Board, the Local Government Association and SOLACE (Rogers, 1998) and the Parliamentary Bill introduced in 1998 contained the requirement to produce community strategies. The reason for the change in title is not entirely clear but appears to have originated in the joint report of the pilot projects and a SOLACE working party (Rogers, 1988).

The Wider Policy Context

1.8   The development of the concept of the community leadership, underpinned by the duty to produce community strategies and the power of well-being, is only one small, and perhaps from the government's perspective uncertain, part of the wider agenda of reform of local government (the Local Government Modernisation Agenda - LGMA). The origins of the LGMA lay in the conviction of the Labour Government elected in 1997 that local government needed to be profoundly changed - but not in the ways that had been done by the previous Conservative Government (Blair, 1998). A fuller critique of local government was presented in the Government's 1999 White paper (HM Government, 1999).

1.9   The Government's programme of reform proceeded with considerable speed and with an immense variety of initiatives. For some this led to 'initiativitis' (6 et al, 2002) for others to 'chaotic centralism' (Corry and Stoker, 2002), for yet others to a 'congested state' (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). But amongst the multitude of modernisation initiatives it is possible to discern some dominant themes:

- *Service Improvement and Performance Management:* represented initially by the best value regime, then in England, by comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and local public service agreements and latterly by Local Area Agreements and the ideas contained in the Government's Local Vision paper on the development of a new performance framework (ODPM and HM Treasury, 2005). Despite the common starting point for both community strategies and best value there appears to have been little evidence of success in inter-relating these two initiatives. However, the future inclusion of community leadership within the CPA framework, the development of Local Area Agreements and the 'new performance framework' do appear to open up some possibilities for joining up these policy themes.

- *Partnership Working and Joined-up Governance:* While community strategies can be viewed as potentially key local processes for achieving improved partnership working with the public, private and voluntary sectors, for engaging with local communities and interests and for working with other tiers of government, it is uncertain (and perhaps doubtful) whether this has been the case in more than a relatively small number of local authorities. Rather, community strategies appear to have been submerged in a welter of other partnership initiatives many of which, unlike community strategies, are directly linked to funding from central government. The role of community strategies has also been made uncertain by the immense growth in the number of plans and strategies that government has required local authorities (together with, in some cases, their partners) to produce and which has led latterly to proposals for 'plan rationalisation' in both England and Wales. In a 'congested state' containing a superfluity of plans and strategies it is perhaps not surprising that the precise purpose and status of community strategies has been sometimes uncertain. However, it is clear that the partnership mechanism that is charged with producing a community strategy - the local strategic partnership (LSP) - has an increasingly important role at the local level. In addition to community strategies, some LSPs are also the key mechanisms for developing neighbourhood renewal strategies, local public service agreements and Local Area Agreements.

- *Democratic Renewal:* This final theme has incorporated both the modernisation of electoral arrangements and the fundamental reform of political management structures and processes. The latter reforms are theoretically of great relevance to community strategies. If community strategies are mechanisms for promoting community leadership then we might expect them to be clearly related to the focus on political leadership within the reform of political management arrangements. While this may have developed for councillors who are part of a political executive, for other councillors the community leadership role may often seem a distant irrelevance. Evidence drawn from the evaluation of LSPs in England suggests that a significant number of councillors are critical of the growing power of such partnerships at the same time as they perceive their own power decreasing.

Conclusion

1.10   Community strategies, as mechanisms for developing the community leadership role of local government, may be regarded as something of an enigma. While, for some commentators, the affirmation of the community leadership role in the 2000 Act was 'of major importance, substantively, historically and symbolically' (Wilson and Game, 2002: 366), in practice the role and purpose of community strategies at the local level appears to be extremely variable and uncertain (See for example the early evidence of the evaluation of community strategies in England being carried out for the ODPM (Wells et al, 2005)).

Public Policy and Governance in Wales

1.11   There are a number of characteristics of public policy and governance in Wales that have an important bearing on the context within which community strategies are prepared and managed. Firstly, the Government of Wales Act 1998 heralded devolution in Wales with the creation of the National Assembly for Wales This devolution settlement does not include any authority to instigate primary legislation or the ability to vary taxes as is the case in Scotland. In addition, the legislative competence of the Assembly is confined to making subordinate legislation under powers transferred to it by the Secretary of State or directly delegated to it. The Richard Commission has recently undertaken a review of the current devolution settlement and, following a period of consultation, some of its recommendations relating to the further devolvement of primary legislative powers from the UK parliament for existing Assembly functions such as health and education have been taken forward in a new Government of Wales Bill.

1.12   The basis of funding between UK Government and the Assembly is the Barnett Formula first introduced in the 1970's. This formula sets the level of the Welsh Block budget and the Assembly is empowered to distribute that budget to the various policy heads. Although the UK statutory framework will significantly shape the level and form of that allocation process, there is some potential for the Assembly to target and address specific problems and priorities in Wales. Hence, the success of some Welsh initiatives such as the abolition of prescription charges for under-25's; free dental check-ups for under-25's and over-60's; free bus passes for pensioners and disabled people; and the introduction of means-tested student support grants.

1.13   The Government of Wales Act also placed two important statutory duties on the National Assembly. The first relates to the need to embrace equality in all aspects of government, and the second refers to the promotion of sustainable development throughout the Assembly's business including the preparation of a Sustainable Development Scheme.

1.14   Since its inception, the Welsh Assembly Government has endeavoured to promote an inclusive policy process involving multiple stakeholders from both within and outside government, and has devised strategies for their engagement from the formative stages of policy development. Formal partnership arrangements have been established with the main sectors including voluntary, business and local government. The Local Government Partnership Council, which brings together the Assembly with local government, is a

particularly important body, as it attempts to mediate the interface between local and national government around complementary financial, policy and performance agendas.

1.15   The Welsh Assembly Government has set out is strategic direction in a number of documents most notably in "Wales: A Better Country" (2003). This articulates a vision for Wales and the priorities for action across the policy spectrum. This agenda has been taken forward in the form of a number of major strategies and initiatives which have implications across many policy areas and levels of governance including Communities First, Children and Young People Strategies, Older Person's Strategies, Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategies. In addition, other specific policy based strategies have emerged covering education, economic regeneration, ICT and waste management. The Wales Spatial Plan and the changes to the system of local development planning have particularly far reaching implications for community strategies. Although the formulation of strategies to cover the policy spectrum is an indicator of the health of the policy process, it does create a number of difficulties. Firstly, there is the major issue of implementation and the ability to convert policy design into effective actions on the ground. Secondly, the profusion of strategies requires coherence, integration and co-ordination in order to avoid duplication, conflict and a general loss in efficiency and effectiveness. Thirdly, the requirement by the Assembly on local authorities and other public bodies to produce numerous local plans and strategies has attracted some criticism and been challenged on the basis of need, availability of resources and problems of co-ordination. The resulting plan rationalisation proposals are designed to address these issues.

1.16   The Assembly has recently set out in some detail the manner in which it intends to approach the process by which policy is undertaken and promoted and has linked this with a 5-year action plan for delivery (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004 and 2005). The key principles underpinning 'the Making Connections agenda' for delivering better services are placing citizens at the centre of service design and delivery; equality and social justice; working in partnership as the Welsh public service; and delivering value for money. The aim is to design and deliver public services that are responsive to the needs of people and communities, particularly those that are vulnerable and disadvantaged; that are accessible to all and open to genuine participation; that are coherent through joined-up and simplified structures; that are more effective in preventing and tackling problems; and that are more efficient in the way they are organised and use resources. The Assembly has also signalled its intention to radically reform and reduce the number of Assembly-sponsored bodies in Wales starting with the merger of the Welsh Development Agency, the Wales Tourist Board and Education and Learning Wales directly into Assembly government. It is argued by the architects of these reforms that this will result in increased democratic accountability and transparency in these key policy areas and streamline the delivery of services, although a counterargument might be that it will represent a greater centralisation of government functions at a national level and stifle innovation, flexibility and entrepreneurship in areas such as economic development. Community strategies are seen to have an important role to play in the delivery of the 'Making Connections' agenda and specific reference is made to them in relation to local participation: "by encouraging everyone to engage in the new Community Strategies, so that they become increasingly effective

in reflecting and meeting the needs of the community as a whole". Also, there is a commitment to review how to strengthen the development of Community Strategies to evaluate the first round of Community Strategies as a tool for improving service delivery and citizen engagement, and to revise the guidance for local authorities.

1.17   In addition to devolved government, there are other institutional arrangements that are peculiar to Wales. Local government is organised around a single, all-purpose unitary model, and in common with England, has been the subject of successive Local Government Acts. The changes to the political management of local authorities has resulted in two models in Wales - a leader and cabinet model, and a model based on a modernised committee structure with enhanced scrutiny powers in place of the cabinet system. The Assembly's overall policy on local government is set out in a statement which covers issues of community leadership, funding, political management arrangements and performance management (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002). The important characteristics of Welsh local government include:

- Wales Programme for Improvement which is the performance management regime that has been developed specifically for Wales to succeed the best value framework. It is "the vehicle through which the Welsh Assembly Government, the Audit Commission in Wales, and Welsh local government itself, stimulate and support change and improvement in Welsh councils" (Audit Commission in Wales, 2004). Its distinctive approach is designed to transfer responsibility for performance management to councils themselves through self-assessment methodologies. Councils are required to undertake a Whole Authority Analysis at least every five years in order to create a baseline assessment of both corporate and service effectiveness. Risk assessments across corporate and service areas are undertaken annually leading to joint Risk Assessments by regulators and individual councils. These are used to generate Improvement Plans and Regulatory Plans. Wales Programme for Improvement is a very important framework for community strategies to engage with because of its statutory basis and the comprehensive nature of the regime covering all council services. However, difficulties are faced with other sectors involved in community strategies such as health and the police because they are the subject of different performance management regimes.
- Policy Agreements are agreements with each individual local authority in Wales and Welsh Assembly Government. They are designed to set out the local authority's contribution to the strategic priorities of the Assembly in exchange for a Performance Incentive Grant over which local authorities have discretion. The system aims to make explicit links between local and national priorities and demonstrate to the public how success is being measured.
- Shared outcome measures are being developed as part of the review of the national Performance Management Framework scheduled for introduction in 2006/7. This reflects the burgeoning inter-organisational agenda and the increasing numbers of agencies working in partnership to deliver services to people and communities across all policy areas. Appropriate measures are being sought to reflect multi-agency and longer term outcomes in areas such as health, sustainable development and poverty.

1.18   Two major ongoing reviews in local government are likely to result in future changes in key areas. The Beecham Review of local service delivery in Wales is tasked with (i) looking at how services are planned, designed, managed and funded, (ii) how the quality and effectiveness of services is measured and evaluated, (iii) who is accountable for services and what information is provided to the public about them, (iv) how managers in different sectors collaborate to plan and improve services and how they engage with users and other stakeholders, and (v) how individuals and communities are informed and consulted about local services including both change proposals and the quality and effectiveness of what is already in place. This review covers very similar territory to this evaluation including the management of cross cutting issues, outcome-focused management, collaboration between different organisations and sectors, and engaging with the public. A second major review is not specific to Wales but is likely to have implications for it. It is the Lyons Review of local government financing which is currently examining the case for changes in the present system including council tax reform, the case for providing local authorities with increased flexibility to raise additional revenue and for shifting the current balance of funding, the feasibility of raising supplementary revenue through local income tax and the reform of non-domestic rates. The remit of the inquiry has also been extended to cover the role of local government in the context of local and national priorities and the implications of this for accountability, the way in which the devolution and decentralisation agenda impacts on local services and the responsiveness to users, and the general accountability relationships between local and national government.

1.19   Radical structural changes in the NHS in Wales have seen the replacement of five health authorities with 22 local health boards with boundaries coterminous with those of local authorities. Also, a joint duty on local authorities and local health boards to prepare Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategies is aimed at cementing an effective relationship between health and local government. A recent amalgamation of the Audit Commission in Wales with the National Audit Office in Wales into the Wales Audit Office brings together auditing and regulation functions for local and national government, the NHS and Assembly sponsored bodies into one organisation.

Community Strategies in Focus

1.20   The Local Government Act 2000 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to prepare community strategies "for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas, and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK". This duty is an integral part of a range of measures introduced by central government under the banner of its 'modernisation of local government agenda'. The development of community strategies is considered to be a clear expression of a local authority's community leadership role. They are intended to be strategies, not just of the local council but also of all public, private and voluntary stakeholders in a local area and of national agencies acting locally. Critically, they are meant to be founded upon constructive and real engagement with local people and communities, and prepared and delivered through an approach based on collaboration between agencies and organisations.

Preparing Community Strategies

1.21 The National Assembly for Wales has issued statutory guidance on the preparation of community strategies to all local authorities (National Assembly for Wales, 2001). It suggests that community strategies should deliver a number of specific objectives:

- To encourage an integrated approach which addresses the social, economic and environmental well-being of local communities and contributes to sustainable development.
- To provide a forum for debating local needs, priorities and aspirations.
- To provide a mechanism for integrated planning and resourcing of local needs by all agencies acting locally.
- To inform Assembly priorities and their local implementation.
- To assist Council's in developing corporate priorities.
- To underpin applications for funding and support.

1.22 In addition, community strategies are intended to be a means of co-ordinating service provision and initiatives, tackling cross cutting issues, acting as an overarching framework for the plethora of other plans and strategies, and to be reflected in the plans of other bodies acting locally. The composition of community strategies must include a long term vision (10-15 years) that focuses on achievable outcomes; an action plan that specifies short term priorities and activities consistent with the longer term vision; a shared commitment to implementation and delivery of the action plan; and robust mechanisms for monitoring and review.

1.23 Arguably, the two most important defining characteristics of community strategies relate to the process through which they are formulated, delivered and evaluated. Firstly, they are intended as expressions of effective involvement of local people and communities and, secondly they need to be grounded in a partnership approach involving public, private and voluntary organisations. In relation to community engagement, the guidance refers to the need to take account of:

- People as individuals as well as members of communities of interest or geography.
- The need to engage people throughout the policy process - implementation and evaluation as well as preparation - and the need to consider the potential effectiveness of different modes of engagement at different stages.
- The need to engage in extra efforts and innovation to capture the views of marginalised or disaffected groups.
- The need to be sensitive to the tensions between representative and participatory forms of democracy, because the role of elected councillors can be challenged by the juxapositioning of these two modes within a community strategy process.
- The need to dedicate resources for capacity building and skills development in the community to assist in its effective engagement.

1.24 The advice offered in relation to community strategy partnerships includes:

- The desirability of balanced representation to promote widespread ownership and particularly to avoid a perception that one organisation dominates the exercise i.e. the local Council.

- The importance of attracting members who have the authority to speak for their home organisations.
- The importance of recognising the operational autonomy of partners - making a separation between partnership and non-partnership business.

1.25   An important aspiration of national government is that the community strategy partnership will perform as a single overarching or strategic umbrella into which the spokes of the other policy centred partnerships will relate, and in addition, that a review of local partnership arrangements might identify areas of duplication and overlaps resulting in some form of rationalisation.

1.26   The Assembly consider that the guidance contains a relative lack of prescription on the precise form and content of the strategies to allow local authorities and their partners to devise particular solutions and approaches to reflect the needs of different areas. However, the Assembly has encouraged all local authorities to link the reviewing of local strategies to local electoral cycles.

1.27   Together with the statutory guidance, a body of informal guidance has been prepared by a number of national agencies who have been keen to support and shape the development of community strategies. In particular, the Environment Agency, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, the Legal Services Commission and the Welsh Language Board have prepared written advice on how to take account of their particular perspectives and issues in the formulation of local community strategies. Other useful material is available from both Scotland and England, and although sometimes specific to those countries, is nevertheless valuable in helping to develop effective approaches to the preparation of community strategies (Wells et al, 2005).

Chapter 2 Research Objectives and Approach

Research Objectives

2.1   The overall purpose of this research study is to provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the community strategies in Wales. It has been commissioned by Welsh Assembly Government and it is intended to inform politicians, managers and practitioners at national and local levels on the effectiveness of the approaches that have been deployed to date by local authorities and their partners. In particular, evidence of good practice is being sought together with an assessment of the extent to which Assembly guidance has been followed. Lastly, recognising that the majority of current strategies are at the formative stage of the policy process, an evaluation of the robustness and fitness for purpose of the implementation structures, and the effectiveness of the frameworks for monitoring and local evaluation are required.

2.2   The scope of the evaluation covers the following main areas:

- An assessment of the position in all 22 study areas.
- An examination of the type, composition and effectiveness of the partnership structures and processes including issues of membership, accountability, resourcing, public engagement and training.
- An analysis of the implementation structures and their potential to deliver policies and programmes on the ground, and influence mainstream policy processes.
- An assessment of the mechanisms and frameworks that have been put into place to monitor and review community strategies, especially the links to existing performance management frameworks.
- A comparison between the Welsh model of strategy preparation and others elsewhere in the UK.

Approach to Evaluation

2.3   Community strategies and the associated processes of community planning are aimed at securing improved quality of life and greater well-being for local communities. This requires the engagement of a variety of local stakeholders from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors in the identification of core local priorities and the development of joint interventions or programmes of action to address what are often complex cross-cutting issues requiring change at a number of levels and across the public policy system.

2.4   The process of identifying and engaging with a variety of stakeholders, of taking account of the resultant multiple perspectives and the varied bases of stakeholder knowledge and expertise will, it is hoped, provide a richer, more rounded basis for determining community priorities, and will also deliver a greater ownership of the community strategy and the programmes of action associated with it, by these multiple stakeholders. Therefore, any evaluation of community strategies must acknowledge and accommodate the fact that there are multiple stakeholders with different views and interests, that the success of the community strategy is contingent on collaborative action drawing on existing resources and that the process of community planning is a vital part of securing the necessary ownership to make delivery of community strategy ambitions

possible. An effective approach to evaluation that is able to work with all of these elements to provide a coherent framework for evaluation and analysis is 'Theories of Change'. The detailed background to this method is summarised in Appendix 1.

2.5   Academics, policy makers and practitioners regularly debate the nature and value of evidence in public policy. This focus on evidence has been heightened since 1997 with the Labour Government's expressed commitment to promoting policies that are 'evidence based'. In 1999, the UK Government Cabinet Office described evidence as:

> "*Expert knowledge; published research; existing statistics; stakeholder consultations; previous policy evaluations; the Internet; outcomes from consultations; costings of policy options; output from economic and statistical modelling. There is a great deal of critical evidence held in the minds of both front-line staff ... and those to whom policy is directed.*" (SPMT, 1999).

2.6   Nutley (2003) considers this wide ranging definition of evidence as one which poses potential problems, particularly in relation to how such eclectic sources of evidence are to be weighted and prioritised when making judgements to inform policy decisions. The challenge of which evidence is 'best' is one that is very familiar to academics, and there remains considerable disagreement between academics from different disciplines about whether some forms of evidence are intrinsically more valuable than others and if so, which they are.

2.7   Natural scientists deploy a clear 'hierarchy of evidence' in their research. This prizes above all 'systematic reviews' of randomised controlled experiments, followed by new randomised controlled experiments. The methodological emphasis is quantitative with large number studies considered critical in providing the kind of certainty that scientists testing new drugs for example, consider necessary. Natural scientists are also clear about the kinds of outcomes they are seeking, for example, a reduction in the incidence of mortality from a specific disease. Conversely social scientists are much more likely to be attracted to a range of methods for generating evidence, though they are much less likely to use experiments, for both practical and ethical reasons. Social scientists may use both qualitative and quantitative methods; their selection dependent partly on the kinds of questions being asked, the context within which the research is to be undertaken and the philosophy of the researcher. For social scientists there is also likely to be a range of (sometimes contested) outcomes that might result; the job of the researcher may be to explore the conditions in which different outcomes occur. Consequently it is much harder to find agreement about a 'hierarchy of evidence' in the social scientists, because researchers often operate from very different value bases.

2.8   While social scientists may disagree about the right approach to research and evaluation, there is nonetheless considerable agreement about the need for any research that is undertaken to be both rigorous and systematic in order that findings can be defended as reliable. In relation to the evaluation of community strategies in Wales this has meant that we have adopted the following approach:

• A research framework that offers flexibility to meet with the range of possibilities for community strategies.

- A methodology that is largely qualitative to account for the fact that we are not just interested in what is happening, but why things are/are not happening, how different stakeholders perceive the same set of events, and what might account for the differences in perception.
- An analytical frame that categorises evidence from different sources enabling us to attach different weights to different sources of evidence. So, for example, we place considerable weight on secondary research/evaluation data that is based on a demonstrably systematic and robust methodology, as compared to secondary data that simply seeks to report 'what is happening' and offers no critical filtering of the quality of that activity.

Research Design

2.9 The delivery of the research objectives was achieved through a multi-method approach consisting of a number of separate but interrelated components. These are described in detail in Appendix 1 and briefly consisted of the following:

- Rapid appraisal of 21 community strategy documents and associated action plans where available.
- Telephone interviews with community strategy officers in each local authority.
- Case studies in 3 community strategy partnerships involving in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, group discussions, partnership health checks and interrogation of documentary evidence.
- Discussions with national networks covering a range of policy areas including planning, health, community regeneration and equality.
- In-depth interviews with national stakeholders.
- 3 national research workshops focused around key themes.

2.10 The fieldwork was undertaken over a period between March and July 2005 by members of the research team.

Research Output

2.11 This evaluation report represents the main output of the research. It examines the effectiveness with which community strategies have been designed and approached in Wales so far. It is important to point out purposes for which it is not intended:

- It is not a public relations document that is designed to promote community planning practice in all local authority areas.
- It is not a survey of community strategy activities that enables direct comparisons and contrasts to be made between individual authorities.
- It is not a 'good practice' guide or cookbook that offers answers to complex management practice and dilemmas.

2.12 Rather, its intention is to inform a wide range of stakeholders at different levels of governance of important issues and challenges inherent in the practice of community planning. In part, these have been sourced through the evidence collected by a number of research techniques, although this focus has been constrained by the fact that most of it relates to the design stage of the process. In part, also, it draws on a considerable body of evidence from the theoretical and empirical literature. There is much learning to be gleaned from different

approaches to strategic management, working in collaboration, and effective engagement with people and communities.

2.13 A series of recommendations have been made as a result of the evaluation. Some relate to issues that need to be addressed rather than to prescriptions as to how they should be resolved. It is hoped that this report will provide a catalyst for reflective learning amongst managers, politicians, citizens and others on the continuing challenges facing the design, implementation and evaluation of community strategies.

Chapter 3   Lessons from Theory and Practice

Introduction

3.1   The body of literature directly concerning community strategies is scarce. However, the notion of a community strategy involves three fundamental processes, each of which have the benefit of a considerable body of both theoretical and empirical material. These processes are:

- Public participation and collaboration
- Working in partnership
- Strategic management in the public sector

A brief overview of the literature in these areas has been undertaken.

Public Participation and Collaboration[1]

3.2   The involvement of people and communities in the governance of their societies is a vexed issue in many western democracies where public participation rates are falling and cynicism about government and politics is a dominant feature. Paradoxically, in this environment of declining public participation in conventional political processes, governments are actively seeking or requiring the public's involvement as stakeholders in collaborative action. This section draws together the key lessons from the experiences of publics involved in public policy collaborations in the UK.

Public Participation and New Labour

3.3   Government initiatives to stimulate public participation are not unique to the current UK Government but they have received a much higher profile since 1997. The UK Government's agenda contains three key elements which are echoed in the priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government:

- *Revitalising the democratic health of the nation.* Reconnecting the public to the state via action to enhance democratic practice by making it more meaningful and relevant to publics' lives.
- *Improving public services.* Public services are perceived to be poor and dominated by the professionals that deliver them. New governing administrations have emphasised the importance of taking account of the views of users and communities in the design and delivery of services.
- *Tackling social exclusion.* Specific communities experience exclusion from mainstream democratic, economic and cultural processes in the UK. Variously described as 'hard to reach', 'disadvantaged' or socially excluded, the UK Government has targeted specific resources towards creating a more inclusive society, such as the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001), which is mirrored by the Communities First initiative in Wales.

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[1] This section draws heavily on Sullivan, H and Skelcher, C (2002) Working across boundaries: Collaboration in public services Basingstoke: Palgrave

Engaging the Public in Collaboration

Who to involve?

3.4 The issue of whose involvement is sought goes to the heart of our understanding of public participation in collaboration. The first point to note is the use of language in public policy. Currently, the term community is preferred. Use of the term 'community' may be reflective of an aspiration for society - that 'community' can be fashioned where it may not already exist. Another reason for the use of the term is a desire to promote inclusive public policy in a society where not all of those present have citizenship, for example, refugee communities.

3.5 Use of the term 'community' does not however resolve all difficulties associated with determining who to involve. For many the nature of 'community' is contested and it is now generally recognised that communities in modern societies take a number of different forms including communities of place, identity and interest (Etzioni, 2000). For some this variety of communities is empowering as membership is based upon a positive choice by an individual to join. However, some see this freedom as being limited to certain members of communities who in their turn will seek to exclude others (Barnes and Bowl, 2001).

3.6 Overall it is central government that wields the most power in determining which publics or communities are to be involved in collaboration, not least because it is central government that determines the priorities for collaborative action. A dominant trend apparent through the regeneration programmes of the last two decades is the desire to engage and involve 'deprived communities' in their regeneration. These initiatives expect that targeted communities will take responsibility for addressing their problems. These localised expectations of 'public performance' suggests that those in receipt of government funding may need to conform to an aspiration of 'community' that is not expected of other members of society.

Public involvement in different levels of collaboration

3.7 Collaborative activity can be categorised as taking place at three levels:

- Strategic: activity that is local authority wide or is sub-regional/regional in nature.
- Sectoral: activity that is concerned with the design and delivery of specific policies or services.
- Neighbourhood: activity that is community focused, e.g. estate, neighbourhood or village level.

3.8 Some initiatives may be level specific while others may operate across a number of levels. However each level holds specific implications for public participation that will determine the nature of the collaborative relationship that develops.

3.9 In strategic collaborations public participation may take a number of forms. Very often the public are not members of the strategic body directing the

collaboration; instead they may be identified as key consultees in the work of the strategic body. Where the public are members of the strategic body directing the collaboration their role is a representative one. As a result the individuals who participate tend to be 'community leaders', that is, people who are recognised as having a legitimate position of authority within their communities.

3.10   Another way of securing representation is through the formation of an umbrella body to represent the interests of a particular group who then elect or appoint a leader to participate in strategic fora. Such an approach can be problematic. For example, where the number of seats available may not actually reflect the diversity of stakeholders in the population exclusion can result. Where there is no infrastructure to link the strategic body with communities the capacity of public representatives to maintain regular communication may be limited. Finally, where the chosen public representatives are not in fact widely recognised by communities as having a connection with them, they may be rejected as appropriate representatives.

3.11   Sectoral collaborations are more focused in their intent, requiring the participation of a particular public group, usually one that benefits from the service that the collaboration is built around. The focus of the collaboration is clear with an emphasis on improved service design and delivery along with the development of enhanced methods of user evaluation. Service users tend to have a more equal presence in these collaborations as there are fewer partners to involve. However in sectoral partnerships professionals, by virtue of their authority, retain considerable influence over decisions and processes.

3.12   Neighbourhood collaborations are focused on a specific area but are wide ranging in their remit. They are well documented in relation to regeneration but are also the focus for environmental sustainability (Local Agenda 21), local service delivery (neighbourhood management) and housing (via estate management boards). It is at this level that public participation in collaboration is potentially widest and deepest. The relative intimacy of the collaborative arrangements means that in terms of representation, a wider range of stakeholders can be represented. It also means that public participation in the collaboration may be easier and more meaningful because it is close to the respective communities (although this may not be the case where neighbourhood initiatives disregard and cut across communities of identity). While the role of the public as community leaders has become increasingly important, past experience suggests that the development of this leadership capacity necessitates consideration of issues such as legitimacy and accountability.

The Role of Community Leaders in Collaboration

3.13   As the capacity of elected councillors to act as community leaders has been called into question increasing attention has been paid to the contribution of other 'community leaders' who are able to speak with authority and have credibility among other partners (Purdue et al, 2000). The sources of community leadership are varied but tend to comprise: leaders of communities of identity, such as faith communities or domestic violence survivors group, leaders of communities of place and leaders of communities of interest, for example nature conservation groups. Their legitimacy as leaders rests upon a number

of factors: authority conferred from elsewhere, specific knowledge, experience of the community or demonstrable evidence of having benefited the community through their actions.

3.14   However, while community leadership may now be accepted as a key component in the successful operation of cross-sector collaborations, past experience of collaborative endeavours suggests that operationalising this can prove challenging to both public organisations and community leaders. There are five issues:

- *The selection of community leaders:* How community leaders are identified and invited into collaborations can be critical in establishing their credibility with the wider community and their impact within the collaboration.
- *'Making' and 'breaking' community stars:* Participation in collaborative activity can give community leaders access to power and decision making in a way that they have not previously experienced. While this can prove positive, the prevailing power relationships among the partners may mean that it is short-lived.
- *Community leaders, representation and accountability:* Whether and how community leaders can be seen to be representative and accountable is a long standing tension in cross sector collaborations.
- *Incorporation:* The experience of collaboration can lead to community leaders becoming incorporated as 'unpaid community professionals', able to manage the bureaucracy and paperwork associated with the implementation of regeneration programmes.
- *Sustaining community leaders:* 'Burnout' is a major problem for community leaders in collaborative activity. They are generally under greater time pressures than statutory partners and will invariably experience stress as a result of their voluntary role.

Public Capacity in Collaboration

3.15   The extent to which members of the public are able to influence collaborations depends in part upon whether or not they are able to draw upon sufficient capacity to support them.

3.16   Public or community capacity is determined by a variety of factors, some of which are individual but others of which are structural. A great deal of attention has been focused upon developing the capacity of individuals within communities. Area based initiatives in the UK devote resources to capacity building programmes that seek to increase the personal skills and confidence of publics through confidence building activities and training in practical skills such as running meetings, making presentations and preparing bids for funding. In addition, lack of time and money can limit individual involvement in collaboration and in some cases public participants are paid for their involvement. The existence of structural inequalities within society and the failure of public bodies to address these will also impact upon the extent to which individuals feel able to participate. So when issues of physical access or translation or interpretation are not addressed, or when there is no provision for childcare in partnership meetings, or there are no 'ground rules' specifying intolerance of racist or sexist language in meetings, then participation for many community members becomes difficult if not impossible.

3.17   The extent to which these challenges will be effectively addressed depends very much on the capacity of local partner organisations. Here other institutional factors will come into play. These factors will determine how the rules for collaboration with communities are established and will be informed both by the culture of the organisations and the consequent priority it affords to community participation. Finally public capacity in collaboration will also be informed by wider environmental factors. For example, in an area where fear of crime is high, community members may feel less able to participate in collaborative activity, which requires attendance at evening meetings. Similarly the location of meetings may restrict who can attend.

3.18   Capacity building can take individuals to different levels of skill and confidence. In some cases the desired outcome is to enable communities to take the lead in leading and managing their own communities. However, in other cases public or community capacity is just one of a number of elements that need to be in place if positive outcomes are to be achieved. The extent to which communities will desire a high level of control over their lives and services will in part be dependent upon available capacity. However, it may also be influenced by the experience of past collaborations and in particular the operation of power relationships within those collaborations.

Power Relationships in Collaboration

3.19   Who has power and how it is measured and employed are important to address if publics are to be able to exercise influence in collaborative endeavours. Successive evaluations of regeneration programmes and health and social care initiatives reveal the level of frustration experienced by community members who gain a place at the decision making table only to find that their input is marginal to the outcomes of the programme (Barnes et al, 2005).

3.20   The imbalance in power stems from the fact that statutory bodies have both the authority to act in key policy and service areas and can call upon significant resources to support them. Although resources in collaborations may be held and dispensed by a superordinate body following a process of consultation, the power bases of statutory bodies gives them an advantage in such debates. However, communities are not without power. Their advocacy may be based upon experiences as a resident in a regeneration area or a service user or a victim or survivor of crime. This experiential power provides a source of expertise that professionals or politicians may not have and gives them credibility and legitimacy with the community and, possibly with other stakeholders. Ways of redressing power imbalances in collaborations include the allocation of a number of places around decision making tables for community members to speak on behalf of or about the experiences of specific groups or communities. However, if statutory bodies are not prepared or required to give up power then it remains likely that 'empowerment' will result merely in the increase of communities' responsibilities rather than their influence (Peterman, 2000).

3.21   Power is a feature not only of formal mechanisms, but also of informal networks between key individuals in collaborations, relationships that are reinforced through familiarity and commonality of interest. The existence of these informal networks contribute to the fact that access to decision making

and participation always seems more likely for some community members than others, despite these various attempts to challenge and change the prevailing power relationships in collaborations.

Engaging the Whole Community

3.22   There are different terms to describe the publics that collaborations seek to involve with least success. These include 'marginalised', 'socially excluded', 'disenfranchised' and most commonly 'hard to reach'. The question of who exactly is 'hard to reach' will vary depending upon the purpose of the collaboration. However, there are some differences in the way in which specific groups are perceived for the purposes of collaboration. Those groups that are most frequently highlighted for involvement include young people and black and minority ethnic communities. The focus on the former tends to reflect concern with the apparent alienation of young people from civic and political life and societies' wider concern with the incidence of anti social behaviour. The concern with the latter communities acknowledges their relative disadvantage and social exclusion and the failure of many community based organisations to represent their interests. Other groups are less likely to be sought as potential collaborators either because of their very marginal status, for example, travellers, drug users and homeless people, or because of the prevailing attitudes of professionals.

3.23   The experience of 'hard to reach' groups appears to show common traits regardless of the context. Therefore it is possible to identify common actions that will help to improve their involvement in future collaborations. A factor that many agree upon is the need to involve 'hard to reach' communities from the beginning of the process. Without this evidence of commitment, later attempts at targeting involvement will be diluted through lack of ownership by the community at large. Accessing 'hard to reach' communities successfully can only be achieved by the use of skilled outreach workers. This approach is resource intensive in terms of time and money. However, it is clear from a number of studies that this approach is more likely than any other to have the desired effect. On occasion this work is best undertaken by a voluntary organisation that has credibility with communities. Otherwise it may be undertaken by community workers who are able to develop relationships with people in the course of their daily lives.

3.24   In some cases the prevailing power relationships and lack of trust between 'hard to reach' communities and the mainstream providers in collaboration may be such that additional support is needed for those groups in order to facilitate their participation. This can result in the creation of specialist bodies whose role is to act as a block of influence within collaborations. In other areas attempts have been made to increase the influence of 'hard to reach' groups by extending traditional mechanisms. One English local authority developed neighbourhood committees to oversee and advise on the spending of regeneration money. The neighbourhoods were small (no more than 1,100 people) and the committees were elected on a representative basis. Turnouts were as high if not higher than in local elections and the resulting elected representatives reflected the diversity of the local communities.

3.25   The role played by monitoring and evaluation has become very important in recording the impact of collaborative efforts upon 'hard to reach' communities.

The experience of early regeneration programmes led to a closer attention to the way in which targets were devised and monitored in subsequent regeneration programmes and there has been an increase in the development and application of community based or community led evaluation frameworks in recent years. However, there is concern that frameworks remain constrained by the use of quantitative data and are not able to complement this with the application of more qualitative findings.

Working in Partnership

Definitions

3.26   Although there is no consolidated body of inter-organisational theory, there is a rich seam of literature and research on inter-organisational forms of working. Regrettably, there is no common and accepted meaning for the terms that are typically used to describe forms of inter-organisation relationships such as collaboration, co-operation, co-ordination, partnership, alliance, and joint working. Such terms are often used interchangeably but mean different things to different people.

Motivations

3.27   There are different motivations and drivers for partnership working and this form of working has both costs and benefits associated with it. The potential benefits of collaborative working include the ability to tap into a comprehensive analysis of a problem domain; to mobilise a diversified response capability; reduce transactions costs associated with other forms of organising; and release the potential for novel and innovative solutions (Gray, 1989). However, it is sometimes taken for granted that collaboration is intrinsically the most effective method of organisation, but as Alter and Hage's (Alter and Hage, 1993) calculus of interorganisational collaboration highlights, there are very real costs to this activity. These can include a loss of status and legitimacy, loss of control and autonomy, conflict over domain, goals and methods, delays in finding solutions caused by problems of co-ordination and a general loss of stability and certainty.

3.28   Collaborative action can be driven by forces internal to organisations who consider that exchanging resources with other agencies is necessary to help them achieve their own goals. This is especially pertinent in the public sector where financial resources are limited and client expectations are ever-rising. Alternatively, the desire for collaboration can often be rooted in a rational/ altruistic motivation that believes that the public interest or individual needs should be at the centre of the organisation of public services and this demands integrated and co-ordinated frameworks of service planning and delivery.

3.29   Oliver (1990) offers a framework that summarises the critical contingencies of relationship formation. The first is described as necessity that equates with the mandated agenda characteristic of current UK public policy. All the others are voluntary interactions determined by asymmetry which is the potential to exercise power or control over other organisations; reciprocity, which emphasises co-operation and co-ordination not power and control; efficiency, particularly around reducing transaction costs; stability, to reduce environmental turbulence

and uncertainty; and legitimacy, where organisations wish to improve their reputation or image. Of course, decisions to interact with other organisations can be determined by multiple contingencies, even though one particular determinant may predominate. Finally, motivations can alter over time given the experiences of joint working and changing contexts and expectations.

Theories

3.30 There is no single model that adequately explains inter-organisational behaviour; rather a number of cross-disciplinary models and theories are advanced to explain these phenomena. Some models visualise a typology of different structural forms, others refer to partnership types. By inference, the system of classification suggests a spectrum that envisages weak/limited forms of co-operation, through to moderate and finally to strong ties and relationships. A number of other models view inter-organisational activity in one or two dimensions reflecting the changes in the intensity of interaction and the magnitude of the reconfiguration of power relationships.

3.31 Mattesich and Monsey (1994) refer to three types of inter-organisational activity: co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration (co-evolution), and Pratt et al (1999) advance a very similar model of partnership behaviour. Co-operation is seen where, even though organisations are motivated by self-interest, it is considered best to co-operate especially in turbulent and uncertain environments; the aim is to try to influence each other and perhaps achieve win-win outcomes; organisations see their future as linked but proceed without collective goals. In comparison, co-ordination is where solutions are knowable and goals are shared not individual; here co-ordinating structures are set up to reduce duplication, to pool resources and achieve a fit between different parts of a service together. Finally, collaboration, co-evolution or co-production is where goals are collective but the environment is very complex requiring new and innovative solutions, not co-ordination of past practice; here partners need to co-design something for a shared purpose, and it is not about consensus but lifting the game to a new level.

3.32 The locus of attention moves away from structure to concentrate on the process of inter-organisational working in a number of models. Gray (1989) captures the collaborative process in three phases: problem setting that involves problem definition, identification and legitimacy of stakeholders and resource identification; direction setting that includes establishing ground rules, agenda setting and exploring options; and implementation and monitoring, whereas Wilson and Charlton (1997) extend this into a five-stage model. These process models imply a degree of linearity in the sequence of stages that may not be a correct representation of reality. Inevitably, the process is messy with frequent feedback loops between the various stages.

3.33 Lowndes and Skelcher (1998) formulate an interesting extension to the life cycle model of partnership working. They make an important distinction between multi-organisational partnerships as an organisational form as opposed to a mode of governance. However, multi-organisational partnerships have a particular affinity with network modes of governance, but at different stages of the partnership life cycle, hierarchical and market relationships can predominate.

So, the early stages of a partnership are characterised by networking with an emphasis on informality and exploration. During the partnership creation and consolidation period there is an emphasis on hierarchical forms of organising to formalise structures and systems. The delivery and implementation stage is conducive to contractual arrangements. Finally, a return to networking is the best strategy in the termination and succession stage.

3.34 A further set of models is based on types of factors: some that concentrate on critical success factors and others that focus on themes and dimensions. Critical success factor models attempt to isolate or identify the key factors that influence the instigation, design, implementation and evaluation of a collaborative venture, often developed from case studies which reflect on what works best and/or what the key influences were on the partnership experience.

Figure 1:   Barriers to Co-ordination

Structural

- Fragmentation of service responsibilities across agency boundaries, both within and between sectors.
- Inter-organisational complexity.
- Non-coterminosity of boundaries.
- Competition-based systems of governance.

Procedural

- Differences in planning horizons and cycles.
- Differences in accountability arrangements.
- Differences in information systems and protocols regarding access and confidentiality.

Financial

- Differences in budgetary cycles and accounting procedures.
- Differences in funding mechanisms and bases.
- Differences in the stocks and flows of financial resources.

Professional/Cultural

- Differences in ideologies and values.
- Professional self-interest and autonomy.
- Inter-professional domain dissensus.
- Threats to job security.
- Conflicting views about user interests and roles.

Status and Legitimacy

- Organisational self-interest and autonomy.
- Inter-organisational domain dissensus.
- Differences in legitimacy between elected and appointed agencies.

Source: Hudson and Hardy (2002)

3.35   Mattessich and Monsey (1992) refer to key influencing factors such as the environment (such as whether there is a history of collaboration in the area or whether the social or political climate is conducive); membership characteristics (such as appropriate cross section of interests, mutual respect and understanding, ability to compromise); process and structure (including clarity of roles, flexibility and multiple layers of decision making); communication; purpose (including vision and goals); and resources (both financial and human).

3.36   A great deal of emphasis is placed on obstacles to successful partnership working and these typically include institutional disincentives, historical and ideological barriers, power disparities, difficulty in gaining consensus over goals and objectives, failure to achieve agreement over problem structures, political, professional and organisational cultures, resource problems and many others. Five categories of barriers to co-ordination are illustrated in Figure 1 (Hudson and Hardy, 2002). Hudson and Hardy consider that successful partnerships need to be evaluated against 6 key principles - acknowledgement of the need for partnership; clarity and realism of purpose; commitment and ownership; development and maintenance of trust; establishment of clear and robust partnership arrangements; and monitoring, review and organisational learning.

Micro-level Perspectives

3.37   Much of the literature on inter-organisational relationships is framed at the macro-level. However, it can be argued that the role and behaviour of individual practitioners and managers in the collaborative process is fundamental to the character and effectiveness of this mode of organising (Poxton, 1999; Trevillion, 1992; and DLTR, 2002). People who work across boundaries - the boundary spanners - are characterised by their approach to collaborative management challenges. Forms of leadership are needed to reflect shared responsibilities, diversity and fragmentation of power relations. Leadership behaviour needs to inspire, nurture, support and communicate with individuals, teams and networks.

3.38   Luke (1998) introduces the concept of catalytic leadership to refer to an ability to think and act strategically; to the possession of interpersonal skills for facilitating a productive working group or network and, as evidence of an underlying character that is fired by a passion for results and a sense of connectedness. Feyerherm (1994) sees leadership within inter-organisational frameworks as the management of meaning - managers of thought/conceptualisers and providers of reasoning; context facilitators and profound questioners.

3.39   Friend et al (1974) focus on a cluster of reticulist or networking skills and emphasise the importance of cultivating inter-personal relationships, communication, political skills and an appreciation of the interdependencies around problem structure and potential solutions. In a similar vein, Hoskings and Morley (1991) summarise the functions of networking as gaining information, achieving influence to help implement the actor's agenda, and to exchange with others, co-operation and resources. Ebers (1997) description of reticulists as 'informational intermediaries' highlights their role in intelligence gathering and scanning activities and in acting as a gatekeeper or bridge between the home organisation and others within inter-organisational domains. The Local

Government Management Board (1997) warns of the perils of informality in networks in terms of the fragility of personal relationships, the creation of cliques and the tensions of multiple accountabilities.

3.40 Inter-organisational activity is often prompted by the need to address complex and interrelated policy problems whose resolution demands new ideas, creativity and lateral thinking in order to break free of conventional and tired paradigms of thinking and action. Entrepreneurial and innovative capacities are highlighted by Leadbeater and Goss (1998) who refer to civic entrepreneurs, and Kingdon (1984) who underlines the importance of 'policy entrepreneurs' skilled at coupling problems, policies and politics. The ability to anticipate and prepare for 'windows of opportunity' is highly valued in the context of limited financial resources and competition for funding.

3.41   Trust is often isolated as one of the most important factors to influence the course of inter-organisational relations, and Webb (1991) is forthright in his assertion that "Attitudes of mistrust and suspicion are a primary barrier to co-operation between organisations and professional boundaries: collaborative behaviour is hardly conceivable where trusting attitudes are absent".

3.42   A significant area of debate concerns a perceived loss of control and accountability within forms of inter-organisational working in contrast to operating in hierarchies or markets. This form of public management can result in goal displacement; a lack of transparency in the policy making process; dispersed and unclear lines of accountability; insufficient democratic legitimacy; and a general "leakage in the channels of authority" (Bardach and Lesser, 1996). Agranoff and McGuire (2001) pose the dilemma that "with no single authority, everyone is somewhat in charge, thus everyone is somewhat responsible; all network participants appear to be accountable, but none is absolutely accountable". The problems are exacerbated by the demands of multiple accountabilities. To whom are individual actors accountable: to their employing organisation, to their profession, to the partnership, or to service users or citizens? The answer is probably all in different ways.

3.43   The idea of disentangling the proportion of responsibility for outcomes between different organisations is perhaps an inefficient measure of assessing collective accountability and of measuring the effect of collaboration. This has prompted Bardach and Lesser (1996) to propose that accountability frameworks in collaborative settings should move way from hierarchical accountability or 'accountability to', and more to a focus on outcomes and results.

Strategic Management in the Public Sector

3.44   We now turn to the third of the three basic concepts that underpin community strategies - that they should be strategic documents in the sense that (a) they are visionary, demonstrating strategic intent, (b) that they should demonstrate a clear link between strategic intent and short-term action, (c) that they are long term, multi-year strategies, (d) that they are holistic, potentially covering all aspects of individual and community wellbeing, and (e) that they incorporate the expectations, visions and actions of a variety of stakeholders.

3.45 There is extensive literature on the concepts of strategy, strategic planning and strategic management and it is not the purpose of this report to review all of it. Rather, our aim is to draw from that literature those ideas that helped shape the creation of community strategies and have also influenced the way in which local authorities and their partners have interpreted the purpose, role and content of community strategies, as well as the processes by which they have been produced.

A Multiplicity of Terminology with Multiple Definitions

3.46 Even a cursory look at the literature quickly reveals that there is no single definition of strategic management. Smith, one of the earlier writers on strategic management in the public sector, suggests that:

> "The literature of strategic management and planning is a terminological minefield. Different organisations use the same terms to describe different things, or different terms to describe the same thing. So what are the differences, if any, between strategic management, strategic planning, corporate strategy, corporate planning, business strategy, business planning, action planning and management planning?" (Smith, 1994:13)

3.47 Smith (1994) draws on Greenley's (1989) four-stage model to help explain the evolution of strategic management:

- Stage 1: *Budgeting and Control* - early 20th century approach to strategic management; based on assumption of little change; the approach simply sought to establish standard levels of budget performance which were compared with actual levels.
- Stage 2: *Long Range Planning* - most prevalent in 1950s and heavily based on technical forecasting techniques and methods that often resulted in the projection of past trends into future plans for business growth or contraction.
- Stage 3: *Strategic Planning* - associated with 1960s/70s and based on assumptions of greater change; this can be seen as a reaction to the limitations of forecasting techniques; focus was shifted to the total, complex business environment which could involve social and political changes as well as those driven by markets and technology.

  > *'The focus was also placed upon identifying changes of direction, developing capabilities and creating strategic thrusts for competitive advantage. It was based on planning cycles, with the annual planning cycle being of particular importance.'* (Smith, 1995:15)

- Stage 4: Strategic Management - Greenley (1989) suggests this is associated with the period from mid-1970s onwards but in terms of application of the concept it may be argued that it was not was not introduced into the public sector until later in the 1980's. But Greenley, like many other authors, find it increasingly difficult to define what it is. In part, it is defined in terms of what it is not (i.e. a reaction to earlier forms of strategising). Otherwise, it is defined in generalities: 'the approach is led by well-defined aims, well-developed means to achieve them, and by pursuing viable opportunities wherever they can be identified, which may be regardless of the nature of current operations.' (Greenley, quoted in Smith, 1994:15)

3.48 Perhaps the most useful overview has been provided by Henry Mintzberg (1994), one of the most prolific and respected experts in this area. His review of the 'strategy field' identified a number of different schools of thought:

- The Design School: strategy formation as a process of conception.
- The Planning School: strategy formation as a formal process.
- The Positioning School: strategy as an analytical process.
- The Entrepreneurial School: strategy formation as a visionary process.
- The Cognitive School: strategy formation as a mental process.
- The Learning School: strategy formation as an emergent process.
- The Power School: strategy formation as a process of negotiation.
- The Environmental School: strategy formation as a reactive process.
- The Configuration School: strategy as a process of transformation.

3.49 It is important to recognise that these 'schools' are not totally independent of each other. They represent different dominant patterns of thinking that help shape the way organisations try to develop and manage strategy. In any one organisation more than one school of thought can contribute to the strategy process. The idea that there are different patterns of thought, or perspectives, is reflected in our analysis of community strategies through the development of our six 'models of change' in Chapter 5.

Two Influential Models of Strategic Planning and Management in the Public Sector

3.50 The late 1980's and early 1990's represents the main period of explicit development of ideas about strategy, strategic planning and strategic management in the public sector. There were numerous attempts to develop models of strategic planning that drew on private sector concepts, two of which were particularly important in influencing thinking in the public sector. Bryson (1988) put forward an eight-step model that drew heavily on private sector models but which was presented very clearly in a public and not-for profit organisational context:

- Initiating and agreeing on a strategic planning process.
- Identifying organisational mandates.
- Clarifying organisation mission and values.
- Assessing the external environment (opportunities and threats).
- Assessing the internal environment (strengths and weaknesses).
- Identifying the strategic issues facing an organisation.
- Formulating strategies to manage the issues.
- Establishing an effective organisation vision for the future.

3.51 Osborne and Gaebler (1992) had an even stronger impact on thinking in the UK in so far as they challenged basic patterns of thinking about public policy and organisation. They defined strategic planning as "the process of examining an organisation's or community's current situation and future trajectory, setting goals, developing a strategy to achieve those goals and measuring the results." (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). They put forward an eight-stage model:

- Analysis of the situation, internal and external.
- Diagnosis: identification of the key issues facing the organisation.

- Definition of the organisation's fundamental mission.
- Articulation of the organisation's basic goals.
- Creation of a vision: what success looks like.
- Development of a strategy to realise the vision and goals.
- Development of a timetable for that strategy.
- Measurement and evaluation of results.

Strategy, Strategic Planning and Strategic Management in Local Government

3.52 For the purposes of this report we can take the Bains report (1972) for England and Wales and the Paterson report (1972) for Scotland as the starting points of recognition of the need for a more managerialist and strategic approach in local government. In particular there was an acknowledgement of the need to apply three principles: first, the need to have unity of purpose across the whole of a local authority (the corporate principle); second, the need for organisational structures and roles that would support the corporate principle (the organisational 'fitness for purpose' principle); and third, the need to be more forward looking, anticipatory and planning oriented (the planning principle).

3.53 The three principles found expression in the concept of corporate planning, which was powerfully promoted Stewart (1973) and his colleagues at the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham. Corporate planning was based on a rational model of decision-making and was greatly influenced by planning methodologies originating in America such as PPBS (Planning Programme Budgeting System). While the ideas were attractive to, and much debated by managers in local government, the evidence about the real use of corporate planning suggests that it was only extensively pursued in a few local authorities such as Greenwich, Lambeth, Coventry and Stockport.

3.54 The corporate planning approach became increasingly subject to criticism (e.g. Caulfied and Schultz, 1993) and gave way to a variety of approaches that were put forward as either a re-interpretation of strategic planning (e.g. Caulfied and Schultz, 1993) or which simply identifies strategic planning as one element of 'good management' (e.g. Audit Commission, LGTB and Institute of local government Studies, 1985), or which used the term 'strategic management' as a way of signifying that they represented a positive movement beyond traditional strategic planning (e.g. LGTB, 1990)

Dimensions of Strategic Thinking and Action in Local Government

3.55 It is possible to identify a number of different approaches that have developed over the last two decades. These are:

- *Strategy as plan making:* Almost inevitably great emphasis continues to be given to the existence and content of formally published plans and strategies. This has been demonstrated by the growth in the number of strategies and plans that central government has required local authorities to produce. Strategies and plans appear to have four theoretical purposes: (1) to give direction to the members and officers of the local authority; (2) as a form of accountability to the Government and its regulatory agencies; (3) as a form of accountability and information to local stakeholders; (4) as a baseline contribution to the process of partnership working.

- *Strategy as redefining the role of local government:* Characteristic of the thinking in the late 1980's and early 1990's was the attempt to redefine the role of local government - the competitive council (Audit Commission, 1988), the entrepreneurial council (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). But perhaps the most dominant of these new definitions was that of the 'enabling' council. While subject to a variety of definitions it is the broadest of these definitions, promulgated by writers such as Stewart and Clark and supported by bodies such as the Local Government Management Board that found greatest favour in local government. Presented most succinctly in an LGMB publication in 1988, the enabling council was put forward as a council that had eleven characteristics - one of which was 'a strategic approach that can identify the need for enabling and guide its development'. In spelling out this strategic approach in more detail, the document then somewhat confusingly incorporates 4 or 5 of the other 10 characteristics within the definition. Thus:

  > *"In its strategy the enabling council has to bring together the capacity to learn of needs, opportunities and problems, with an appreciation of community resources; an understanding of how those resources can be enhanced and an inventory of its own powers and resources"* (LGMB, 1988).

  The concept of the enabling council is particularly important in the context of community strategies because it became a significant contributor to the later development of the concepts of community governance and community leadership

- *Strategy as Strengthening the Corporate Centre:* As a response to the criticism that local authorities have traditionally been service-dominated organisations most local authorities have responded by developing corporate roles (chief executives, strategic directors etc), corporate units (policy, performance etc) and corporate processes (more centrally controlled policy planning, budgeting and performance monitoring processes)

- *Strategic management as learning:* The development, initially in the private sector, of the concept of the 'learning organisation' by management gurus such as Senge (1990) appears to have some impact on strategic management in local government. Succinctly expressed at a large conference entitled 'Strategies for Success' in November 1990, the Chief Executive of the Local Government Training Board stated:

  > *"At the centre of my definition of strategic management is a capacity to learn and to adapt. Any organisation which does not have this capacity is going to find it difficult to even struggle through the 1990s. Learning comes from reviewing the environment within which the local authority is operating and identifying the various strands of change, problems and opportunities. Adaptation comes from meeting their consequences"* (LGTB 1990).

- *Strategy as 'Strategic Choice':* At the basis of much of the thinking about strategy is the assumption that local authorities need to exercise a series of 'strategic choices' and that these choices lie at the heart of strategic planning and management. This approach is well represented by writers such as Leach and Collinge (1998) but is also reflected in some publications of the Local Government Management Board (LGMB, 1994) and the Improvement and Development Agency and Audit Commission (IdeA and Audit Commission, 2005). These choices concern, not just the extent and quality of services provided, but also choices about organisational values and purpose and the

structure and decision-making processes of the organisation. Strategic choice is expressed in terms of local authorities identifying the key challenges they face, then determining their overall purpose (function) and then designing the organisation appropriately (form). In this view of the world 'form must follow function'.

The Current Approach: Strategy management as simply a part of 'good management'

3.56   Despite the increasing tendency for central government to require local authorities to prepare a variety of strategies and plans, strategic planning and strategic management appear to have been somewhat eclipsed in the language of local government management. In part this is because, as referred to above, strategic planning and management has become incorporated in broader concepts of 'good management' or 'good governance'. It also results from the fact that new terminologies have become increasingly used - 'vision', 'leadership' and 'performance management' being three terms that repeatedly occur in the publications of the Government (see for example the Government's 'vision' for local government, ODPM, 2004d) and its agencies such as the Audit Commission (for example, its assessment framework for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment). These concepts, although they can all be associated with strategic planning and management, are not explicitly defined or labelled as such. At the same time, although 'strategies' are everywhere and although the Government often seeks to prescribe or guide the shape of and processes for creating the strategies, there simply appears to be less discussion of strategic planning and management per se.

Critiques of Strategic Management

3.57   While strategic thinking, planning and management is self-evidently an important and proper part of good management there has also been a healthy line of criticism that has continually challenged both the ideas and practical limitations of their implementation. Critiques of the utility of the strategic planning school of thinking can be found everywhere - Bryson (1988) provides one succinct criticism:

> *"Any strategic planning process is worthwhile only if it helps decision makers to think and act strategically. Strategic planning is not an end in itself ... Indeed, if any strategic planning process gets in the way of strategic thinking and acting, the process should be scrapped not the thinking and action."* (Bryson, 1988:46).

3.58   An example of a more fundamental challenge to the ideas underpinning strategic planning is provided by Clegg et al (2004) who identify 'seven fallacies of strategic management':

- The gap between managerial fantasy and organisational capabilities.
- The gap between actual clear goals and possible, unpredictable futures.
- The gap between planning and implementing.
- The gap between planned change and emerging evolution.
- The gap between means and ends.
- The gap between a planning head (management) and a planned body (organisation).
- The gap between order and disorder.

3.59   While some critics (Leach and Collinge, 1998) see the weaknesses and difficulties of strategic planning as something that results from poor implementation and which can therefore be overcome, Clegg et al (2004) argue that their seven weaknesses are not the result of poor implementation, but they result from fundamental weaknesses in the concepts that underpin strategic management.

Conclusion

3.60   While the concepts of strategy, strategic planning and strategic management can be challenged, it is clear that the application of these concepts has evolved over several decades and has had an important effect on the way local authorities are managed, and also on the way that people think they should be managed. Although there is evidence that it is difficult for public sector organisations such as local authorities to fully implement the principles of 'good' strategic management, the expectations on them to do so appear to have increased. Community strategies can be seen as the pinnacle of the aspirations and expectations placed on local authorities to exercise good strategic management, given that they include the requirements to be visionary, to link vision to action, to be long-term, to be holistic and to incorporate the expectations and actions of a wide variety of stakeholders.

Chapter 4   Lessons from Community Strategies in England and Scotland

Introduction

4.1   As in Wales the Local Government Act 2000 provides the legislative basis for the development of English local government's community leadership role. The power to promote social, economic and environmental wellbeing, the duty of community strategy and the development of local strategic partnerships (LSPs) are the key policies that underpin this role. Other policies such as proposals for plan rationalisation and the offer of various freedoms and flexibilities also contribute to the capacity of the local authority to act as community leader in England.

4.2   In England some local authorities had developed community strategies and, in some cases, LSPs, prior to the Local Government Act 2000. In general, the process of developing community strategies began rather earlier in England than in Wales meaning that many local authorities now have, or are embarking on the production of, a second Community Strategy. This offers the possibility of gathering useful learning for Welsh community strategy partnerships from English experiences. However, there are important differences between the policy and institutional contexts of England and Wales. These are described first in order to help situate the following discussion.

The English Context

4.3   Government guidance for community strategies in England stated that they should set out the local priorities for the area (long term vision), provide the basis upon which progress in meeting those priorities could be assessed (an action plan and monitoring arrangements), and engage local partners in developing and delivering the community strategy (demonstrate a shared commitment to improvement). LSPs were the intended vehicles for involving partners and developing programmes of joint action (DETR, 2000).

4.4   LSPs are bodies that bring together different parts of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, in order that their activities might complement each other and generate improved services and better social, economic and environmental outcomes. They are non-statutory and non-executive bodies that operate at a level which enables them to act strategically, while at the same time being relevant and accessible to direct community engagement (ODPM/ DfT, 2006). They have a co-ordinating role in relation to policy, for example, bringing cross-sector bodies together to support the development of the community strategy, as well as identifying opportunities for reducing the number of plans, partnerships and stand alone initiatives that operate locally.

4.5   In addition LSPs are key agents in the design and delivery of local neighbourhood renewal strategies in particular local authority areas. As a consequence of the national strategy for neighbourhood renewal (SEU, 2000), local authorities in the 88 most deprived areas of the country were allocated additional funding (neighbourhood renewal funding) to be spent addressing neighbourhood deprivation. Key objectives of the neighbourhood renewal

programme include: securing more jobs, better educational attainment, improved health, reduced crime, better housing and physical environment, and narrowing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest. The LSP was given responsibility for overseeing the allocation of that funding and is held to account by central government, through the regional government offices, for the impact of that funding in supporting the alleviation of poverty and helping to meet key 'floor targets' set by government through the neighbourhood renewal unit. Consequently in England there are two distinct kinds of LSPs, those with NRF funding and those without; both however are expected to be central in the development and delivery of the Community Strategy.

4.6   The Government's commitment to plan rationalisation stems from an assumption that the large number of statutory plans that local authorities are required to produce have a constraining effect on their capacity to act locally. Using a process of review supported by legislation the Government has, since 2002, acted with the aim of reducing and rationalising plan requirements by 75%. This has impacted on local authorities in different ways. In some cases all local authorities have benefited from changes to plan requirements, for example, by removing the requirement to produce seven separate plans in relation to children's services and replacing them with a single children and young people's plan. Those local authorities deemed 'excellent' as part of the comprehensive performance assessment are afforded further freedoms in relation to the production of plans, e.g. they are not required to produce the children and young people's plan.

4.7   There have been important developments in Government's thinking about the role and contribution of LSPs and community strategies in the last year or so. Community strategies have now been re-branded as 'sustainable community strategies'. This was a result partly of the Egan review of *Skills for Sustainable Communities* (ODPM, 2004) which expressed concern at the capacity of existing local interventions to help support the development of sustainable communities (balancing social, economic and environmental goals), and argued that progress would be accelerated if there were closer linkages between this activity and that of community strategies. It was also linked to the piloting of a new policy initiative, Local Area Agreements (LAAs) in 2004. Local Area Agreements are intended to act as mechanisms for delivering better local service outcomes through improved coordination between central government and local authorities and their partners. The LAA prospectus (ODPM, 2004a) suggests that these aims will be achieved through: devolving decision-making; focusing on a range of agreed outcomes shared by all delivery partners; simplifying the number of additional funding streams from central government; allowing greater flexibility for local solutions to match local circumstances; helping to join up public services more effectively; and reducing bureaucracy and cutting costs. Sustainable community strategies are considered to have a key role in providing robust (evidence based) and relevant (publicly supported) local priorities to help set the LAA agenda (ODPM, 2005a).

4.8   In December 2005 the ODPM issued a consultation paper on LSPs *(Shaping their Future)*. This makes a number of proposals for the future direction of LSPs (also making reference to their importance as contributors to and deliverers of LAAs). It identifies LSPs as becoming 'the strategic lead in the locality', having a

key role in developing the local sustainable community strategy. The strategy in turn would 'set out the vision and priorities for the area with the Local Area Agreement defining the detailed outcomes, which will be part of the sustainable community strategy action plan. The local development framework is then the land-use delivery plan for the sustainable community strategy' (ODPM, 2005a:9). The local authority remains the body that is 'ultimately accountable' for the LSPs actions (ibid:11). The consultation also seeks views on key questions including whether or not local partners should be subject to a 'duty to co-operate with the local authority', what this would mean in terms of resource and other obligations on partners, which local public sector partners should be subject to these obligations and assessed on their performance as partners; and whether local authorities (and others) should be subject to a statutory duty to promote the engagement of the voluntary and community sectors in the LSP.

4.9   The development and implementation of the local government modernisation agenda in England has been supported by a multi-million pound programme of evaluation sponsored by the ODPM. This includes long term evaluations of community strategies, local strategic partnerships (LSPs) and the take-up and use of the power of well-being. These have provided the basis for the material contained in this section, although a range of other sources have been trawled including material provided by the English LGA and the Improvement and Development Agency. The key findings from the assessments of English experiences to date are considered below.

Context

4.10   The national evaluation of LSPs has consistently highlighted the importance of context in shaping local experiences of LSPs (ODPM/DfT, 2005, 2006). In their final report the evaluators conclude that LSPs that have made progress are those which are rooted in 'a positive local context' including: 'a history of strategic partnership working predating the LSP, and of trust and good working relationships between partners. Positive local contexts are also those in which the geographical area covered by the LSP is a good 'fit' with both socio-economic patterns, and with the boundaries of key partners, and in which there is a stable local political environment (ODPM/DfT, 2006:116). By contrast, those LSPs that have experienced difficulties in becoming established may be operating in a local context in which there is 'no tradition of strategic partnership and little trust between key partners, some of whom may not see how LSP covering the area in question has strategic relevance to them. Political turbulence in the local authority may inhibit the local authority's ability to give sustained community leadership, and other key partners may also be preoccupied with their own concerns' (ODPM/DfT, 2006: 117). The importance of these factors on the development and robustness of LSPs and community strategies suggests that local actors need to both understand the key contextual factors operating in their locality and find ways of supporting positive contextual attributes while transforming or minimising the impact of negative contextual factors.

4.11   A variety of other contextual factors are also considered important in influencing the development of LSPs and Community Strategies including: changes in the institutional environment, e.g. the emergence of new regional policy and delivery bodies or changes in the organisation of national services

such as the NHS or police services; the development of new policy agendas, such as the emerging neighbourhood agenda; and the introduction of new governance mechanisms including, most recently, the introduction of Local Area Agreements the need to connect to and inform/be informed by neighbourhood and regional agendas. Many of these latter contextual influences are under the control of central government and the impact that they have on LSPs and community strategies may be ameliorated should national policy makers be attentive to the implications of their policy programmes on local circumstances and local mechanisms for 'joining-up' local action. One way in which this has been attempted in England is via the Innovation Forum (a forum for CPA rated 'excellent' authorities in England) which has worked with policy makers to find ways of 'joining-up' central and local interests, most recently through the programme of Local Area Agreements.

4.12   Context is not static but dynamic (Barnes et al, 2003). Consequently contextual factors will change over time and predicting how LSPs and community strategies can best interact with them will always be uncertain. However, given the impact that such factors can have on local capacity to act it is important that LSPs and community strategies are developed with a view to, at best shaping or responding to, or at worst, accommodating, changes in context.

Time

4.13   Evaluations of partnership working regularly make reference to the importance of time in enabling the development of strong partnerships that are fit for purpose (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). This is reiterated by many of the evaluations examined in the course of this research. The national evaluation of LSPs is at pains to emphasise the considerable progress made by many LSPs in England, given the fact that most have only been in existence for 4 or 5 years (ODPM/DfT, 2006). The national evaluation of community strategies makes reference to the time needed for localities to generate sufficient capacity to produce a robust and meaningful community strategy that is owned by local stakeholders and the public (ODPM, 2005b). Finally the national evaluation of the take-up and use of the well-being powers considers the time needed for local authorities to develop their capacity as community leaders (and to demonstrate this convincingly to their partners and the public) (ODPM, 2005c). In each of these cases the passage of time (coupled with a positive context) allows for new rules, relationships and roles to reach maturity.

Resources

4.14   Resources are identified as necessary for two purposes: to build a strong strategic partnership/develop a community strategy (process), and to begin delivering change in line with agreed priorities (delivery). They may be offered 'in kind', i.e. secondment of staff or allocation of premises, or they may be financial resources. The amount and kind of resource needed will depend on the kind of local strategic partnership that is envisaged; one directly engaged in developing and delivering initiatives will require different resources to one that is concerned with overseeing the delivery of the community strategy by its member bodies.

4.15 Drawing on the work of the LSP evaluation, the ODPM's recent consultation paper on the future of LSPs (ODPM 2005a) suggests the following as key building blocks for successful LSPs:

- Leadership: clarity of vision, commitment of all partners to agreed priorities/targets and embedding these within partners' own business plans.
- Delivery manager: a senior manager and small team to enable and drive implementation of the local strategy. This involves planning, coordinating action with priority places and groups, project management, overcoming obstacles and tracking progress.
- Delivery system: a system with sufficient analytical capacity is needed to collate and analyse data, appraise options and provide evidence-based management information to drive and monitor performance.
- Communication across the partnership, with all sectors and with the public is vital so there is awareness of goals, actions and achievement (p.44).

4.16 Recent findings from the LSP and Community Strategies evaluation in England indicate that the kinds of resources implied by the above prescription for success are not always available in localities. For example the LSP final report (ODPM/DfT, 2006) found that the average LSP had 2.8 people to deal with management and administration. NRF LSPs tended to have more staff than this as did urban and county LSPs. The average level of resource support for LSP management and operations was £78,000. Most funding came via the local authority, though in some cases partners had also made contributions (in cash or in kind). NRF LSPs averaged £112,000 and non NRF LSPs, £64,000. Nonetheless many respondents in the evaluation believed themselves to be overstretched in terms of the ambitions of their LSP. This was linked to two particular factors: their role, and the relationship of the LSP to the local authority. In relation to the first, the more the LSP concerned itself with delivery rather than strategy, the greater the perceived demand for resources to support this delivery activity. For the second, the more independent LSPs were from the local authority, the less resource they were likely to have, as local authorities tended to be the main supporter of LSPs in the locality.

4.17 The LSP evaluation (ODPM/DfT 2006) sounded a cautionary note in terms of resources arguing that that the number of staff available to the LSP was a crude indicator. Those LSPs that were considered 'fit for purpose' by the evaluators were those that had staff at the appropriate levels of salary, seniority and with the right skills levels for what the LSP was trying to achieve. In general, LSPs reported concerns about insufficient skills in relation to the use of evidence, evaluation and performance management, and bid writing. There was also some concern from respondents that the staff skills mix utilised by LSPs for developing their strategies would not be appropriate should the LSP move into delivery. Both the LSP and community strategies evaluations highlighted the importance of key senior staff being deployed to drive and develop successful LSPs and community strategies (ODPM/DfT, 2006, ODPM, 2005b).

4.18 In terms of the acquisition and application of resources for delivery, the LSP evaluation (ODPM/DfT, 2006) noted the importance of 'additional' central government resource streams, in particular NRF, to the activity levels of LSPs. While the 'bending' of mainstream resources was identified as a key issue for LSPs, for the most part activity to date has focused on identifying, accessing

and utilising 'additional' resource streams. The community strategies evaluation (ODPM, 2005d) reported that community strategy documents rarely contained explicit references to the identification and application of resources to achieve community strategy goals. Researchers found that:

'Most left issues of resources to partnership meetings. As such the documents therefore set out what partners through the LSP agreed were priorities, some indication of the actions required to achieve these priorities, but very little assessment of whether such actions could be funded, and how such actions could be funded. To some extent it is appropriate that Community Strategies take this approach and provide the basis for joint working on budgets. However, it is expected that Local Area Agreements will change this and there will therefore be a need in future documents to consider budgetary issues' (p64).

4.19   Evidence from available evaluation data suggests that while considerable commitment of time and resource is needed to build a strong strategic partnership and develop a shared community strategy, there are parallel pressures on local partners to begin delivering change. While these tensions are inevitable, without allowing the time necessary to sort out effective processes, partnerships will encounter difficulties as they face the challenges of delivery (ODPM/DfT, 2005).

4.20   Supporting the operation of a local strategic partnership requires access to resources (staff mainly). In some cases this work has been done by the local authority, in others, a combination of bodies have contributed. The role of the local authority in developing the community strategy, in particular the dedication of senior strategic level staffing, is crucial. However, successful strategies depend on the preparatory work of other key partners. LSPs face challenges in reconciling the remits and requirements of different stakeholders within the membership of the LSP and between the LSP and local politicians, local people and central government.

Membership and Involvement

4.21   As the reports of the national evaluation of LSPs reveal (ODPM/DfT, 2005, 2005), LSPs have devoted considerable time and effort to partnership building in their first few years of existence. Many consider the job to be an ongoing one, involving regular reviewing and refreshing of partnership membership, structures and processes. The evaluations of LSPs and community strategies have paid particular attention to the following issues in their examination of partnership membership and involvement: the role of local government, the involvement of the voluntary and community sectors, and the engagement of the private sector.

4.22   A key challenge for *local government* as reported throughout the life of the LSP evaluation is how to support the development and operation of the LSP without dominating it. The LSP evaluators conclude that this is a very difficult balance to strike particularly as local authorities have the responsibility of both driving the development of the LSP and monitoring its activity in fulfilment of its role as the democratically elected body in the locality. In general other partners to the LSP expect local authorities to play a key role in supporting the LSP, and acknowledge its particular legitimacy as a democratic institution.

This is acknowledged in the LSP evaluation (ODPM/DfT, 2005), the evaluation of the well-being powers (ODPM, 2005c) and the LGMA 'meta' evaluation (Sullivan and Sweeting, 2005). Nonetheless charges of 'paternalism' and 'local authority dominance' are still commonplace. Some local authorities have sought to pre-empt such concerns by giving over the chairing of the LSP to an individual from another sector. This has met with varying levels of success, partly dependent upon the skills and legitimacy of the person who takes the chair (ODPM/DfT, 2005).

4.23 A particular issue that has emerged in the latter years of the LSP and community strategies evaluations concerns the role of councillors, particularly non-executive councillors, in the development of community strategies and operation of LSPs. Initial guidance for community strategies (ODPM, 2000) identified the following roles for elected members: as community or ward representatives; as members of overview and scrutiny committees; as members of area and neighbourhood forums and committees; formally adopting the community strategy as part of the full council; and monitoring the achievements of the local authority and other partners within the LSP against delivery of the sustainable community strategy action plan. However, evidence suggests that while executive councillors (Cabinet members) tend to sit on LSPs and be more directly engaged in the development of community strategies, non-executive councillors, remain largely disconnected from both initiatives. There is also limited engagement of parties outside the ruling group(s). This marginalisation of councillors is compounded where the LSP has its own links with communities e.g. through area arrangements, and where the council's scrutiny arrangements are poor (Goss, 2005, ODPM/DfT, 2006, Sullivan and Howard, 2005).

4.24 Even where elected members are engaged there is concern that their contribution operates below their capacity. For example the ODPM consultation paper on the future of LSPs argues that:

> 'Currently, there is a high level of local authority representation on LSPs (99% of LSPs have councillors represented). However, the function they are performing is not always the most appropriate one and existing council mechanisms like the overview and scrutiny committee are not being used to greatest effect. Research into the current progress made by LSPs on community strategies suggests that the precise role of elected members of the local authority, both the executive and backbenchers is currently not understood' (ODPM, 2005:39).

4.25 An ongoing challenge in relation to the private sector is the identification of ways in which to secure engagement from businesses. The LSP evaluation reported that despite specific government guidance and research into ways of engaging business interests, they remain hard to involve in LSPs (ODPM/DfT, 2006). Most businesses are likely to be involved via representatives, e.g. Chambers of Commerce, rather than directly as individual businesses. Few LSPs have longstanding business interests present on their executive bodies and in key themes, although businesses are more likely to engage in sector specific themes, such as employment. According to the LSP evaluators the key is to 'involve business at the right level and keep a balance between maintaining involvement without asking too much and the danger of looser arrangements which can lead to 'separatist' tendencies' in the case of some more action-oriented partnerships

(ODPM/DfT, 2006:68). In general LSPs that were successful in engaging the private sector were those that were able to define very clearly and precisely how businesses could contribute to the goals of the LSP and the community strategy.

4.26 This message was supported by the evaluation of community strategies which reported that few community strategies outlined a role for the private sector in implementation. An exception to this was Croydon which the evaluators considered to have a very clearly defined private sector strategy. Other community strategies identified the creation of a business forum as a key activity in implementation (ODPM, 2005d). The community strategies evaluation reported that the private sector bodies were most likely to be engaged in community strategy themes dealing with the economy and employment, housing and education themes. The evaluators reported that private sector organisations tended to be involved in one of three ways:

- As representatives of the sector, typically through a Chamber of Commerce or specialist business federation (e.g. Islington and Blackburn with Darwen)
- As specific companies which have a key partnership role and may play a specific part in the development of projects (e.g. Nestle in Croydon or Blackburn Rovers FC in Blackburn with Darwen)
- Where a company has been formed to be the 'delivery' or 'investment' vehicle for part of the Community Strategy. For example joint investment companies in Liverpool (ODPM, 2005d: 56).

4.27 LSPs and community strategies have had to pay particular attention to *the effective engagement of the community and voluntary sectors* (VCS). Both the national evaluations of LSPs and community strategies raised questions about the success of LSPs and community strategies in involving the VCS, the community strategy evaluation describing engagement as 'incredibly limited' (ODPM, 2005d:54). Both concluded that there was no single approach that would secure the involvement of the voluntary and community sectors. Instead LSPs and community strategies had to offer a range of opportunities appropriate to the diverse interests and capacities of the sector. This included provision for representation on the different structures of the LSP (from the executive core through thematic partnerships to neighbourhood based structures), opportunities for a wider range of voluntary and community sector bodies to contribute to the deliberations of the LSP and the development of the community strategy (including focus groups and workshops) and opportunities for the wider public to engage (such as road shows, household surveys, 'vox pop' interactions) (ODPM/DfT, 2006, ODPM, 2005d, Russell, 2005).

4.28 The LSP evaluation (ODPM, 2006) argued that LSPs could provide support to the VCS in a variety of ways: through allocation of funding to support engagement, dedicated work with LSP VCS representatives to brief them on matters of process ('the rules of the game') and substance (upcoming agenda items that the VCS may need to consult on), support with networking across the sector and with organisations from other sectors, and in developing agreed rules of engagement with the sector, for example through the development of 'compacts' with the VCS. The evaluation also concluded that LSPs could draw on a wide range of established mechanisms and practices, such as user forums and neighbourhood bodies, to reach out to wider communities. However, the evaluators argued that in order for the LSP and VCS to get the best from each

other the LSP needed to be clear on a number of core questions including: what is the function of the VCS in relation to the LSP and its priorities; what is the role of VCS representatives in relation to their own constituencies as well as the LSP; what scope is there for clarifying roles and relationships and how should this be done to strengthen both?

4.29   The community strategies evaluation reflected this concern with the purpose of VCS engagement. Its review of community strategies found that while the VCS were included in the LSP as members, they were rarely given specific roles in the implementation of the community strategy (ODPM, 2005d). In the main public service themes of community strategies, the evaluators found that fewer than half of community strategies for each theme stated that they involved the sector. The evaluators also recorded limited references in community strategies to the 'compact' between local authorities (and other public organisations) and VCS organisations. They argued that:

> *'This is surprising, not least because compacts are intended to engage VCS organisations in key local strategies, but also because of the increasing emphasis given developing the role of VCS organisations in public service delivery'* (ODPM, 2005d:54-55).

4.30   The community strategies evaluation revealed that VCS organisations were more likely to be involved in streams of activity related to 'neighbourhood and community' than others, though they were also identified in health and housing themes, but not those focused on employment and education. It provided some examples of engagement in different themes (Figure 2).

Strategy Making

4.31   Nearly all local authorities and LSPs in England have now produced a first and second Community Strategy. Second drafts are considered to be much more focused on priorities and service delivery, and reflect more detailed involvement and consultation with stakeholders and local communities. At the same time evaluators report that there remain capacity gaps amongst partners in relation to their ability to contribute to LSPs and community strategies (ODPM/DfT, 2004, 2005).

4.32   An early LSP evaluation report found that successful strategy building presupposed a level of maturity in partnership arrangements and that 'inclusive strategy making' (whether for community strategies or local neighbourhood renewal strategies) required dedicated senior officer time from a number of partners to facilitate an inclusive process (ODPM, 2005e).

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Figure 2:   Examples of Voluntary and Community Sector Involvement

Health and Social Care

- Patient Forums (Bradford).
- Disabled People into Work project and CAB (Islington).
- Ethnic Minorities Development Association (Bradford).
- Rural Community Council, CAB and Relate through a Rural Stress Initiative (Northumberland).

Education and Learning

- Barnsley Neighbourhood Learning Network (Barnsley).

Crime

- Community Risk Management Groups (Wigan).
- Women's Aid (an organisation working on domestic violence) (Mansfield).
- Refuges and other support to victims of domestic violence (Wear Valley).

Housing and Physical Environment

- Wildlife Trust (North Tyneside).
- Housing associations, community recycling projects and Groundwork (Southwark).
- Council for Voluntary Service and Interfaith Council (Blackburn).
- Groundwork (Mansfield).
- Groundwork (Wear Valley).

Employment

- Groundwork (Islington).
- Prince's Trust (Mansfield).

Community Development

- Interfaith Council and Asian Women's Forum (Blackburn).
- Village Hall Committee (Wychavon).

(Source: ODPM, 2005d: 54)

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4.33   It also found that relatively few LSPs had gone beyond the dominant modes of strategic planning in their approach to designing either the community strategy or the local neighbourhood renewal strategy, and that little attention was paid by respondents to drawing on the wider literature and experience of strategic alliances and collaborative strategy in developing their strategies.

The design of strategies

4.34   The community strategies evaluation undertook a thorough examination of the contents of all community strategies in England, examining them for evidence of sound strategy making (ODPM, 2005d). The evaluators found that while the majority of community strategies had been published by the LSP, the local authority that had provided most support in developing the document.

4.35 Community strategies commonly contained 'vision' statements and a strategy, though not all contained action plans; these were often contained in separate documents. Community strategies offered a range of approaches to monitoring from outlining the processes to be undertaken to providing a detailed list of how specified targets would be measured.

4.36 Vision statements were considered to be remarkably similar by the evaluators focusing on general issues of the wellbeing of an area (e.g. quality of life) and referring both to improving working lives and to improving the area as a place to live. Some strategies were considered to contain more specific visions that reflected key issues facing the locality. Bradford and Blackburn with Darwen (both with an emphasis on community cohesion) and Craven and Eastleigh (which emphasised the quality of the natural environment) were cited as examples. Interestingly the evaluators found that excellent-CPA rated authorities were those least likely to have vision statements, while all poor rated authorities and 97.2 percent of weak authorities had vision statements. The evaluators concluded that:

> 'vision statements are an opportunity to embody the overall aims of the LSP, they need to have meaning for both stakeholders (LSP members and their organisations) and also local residents and those not directly involved in the process, and steer individual themes or priorities' (ODPM, 2005d:7)

4.37 The evaluators found that NRF supported areas were more likely to have an action plan in their community strategy (91.7 percent in NRF compared to 85.7 percent in non-NRF funded areas). Again excellent CPA rated authorities were found to be least likely to have an action plan (84.6 percent) with poor authorities most likely to have an action plan (94.4 percent).

4.38 Most community strategies were found to be structured around themes with four common themes emerging: community safety, health and social care, economy, business and jobs and education and skills. The evaluators found that environmental issues were also significant (more so than housing), as were specific themes for community and transport.

4.39 A number of community strategies also made reference to cross-cutting themes, usually social inclusion, sustainable development and partnership working. In some cases this reflected the complexity of the policy environment and the challenges faced by the locality. The evaluators cite several examples of this including:

- Liverpool community strategy was working to achieve NRF targets, to implement geographically targeted cluster strategies and to deliver thematic priorities which cut across traditional policy domains.
- Croydon where the community strategy appeared to have successfully combined issues around neighbourhood renewal, improvements in public services and more generally to develop Croydon as a place which is attractive to local residents and to business.
- Blackburn with Darwen community strategy a draft strategy which demonstrated the specific challenges the area faced, not least in promoting community cohesion. As a result three of the seven priorities directly addressed community issues, whether these be at a neighbourhood level (through physical regeneration), promoting cultural harmony (across faith

and ethnic communities), or finding ways to engage people (through community partnerships) (ODPM, 2005d: 19).

4.40 The evaluators focused on Wandsworth community strategy as one which, in their view, presented a clear picture of key strategic priorities and the process by which these would be implemented and who would be involved. The identification of each strategic priority in the community strategy was accompanied by material pertaining to:

- Context (including national statistics).
- Resources.
- National and local priorities.
- Key strategies and plans.
- What residents think.
- The challenges ahead.
- Our Vision for the future.
- Each objective (including for each objective why it is important, what is being done now and in 3-5 years and who will ensure this is achieved) (ODPM, 2005d:19).

Accessibility of strategies

4.41 The community strategies evaluation commented positively on the accessibility of local community strategies to the public and local stakeholders. Most documents were available via the web and were located on the LSP's own site, on the partnerships' sections of local authorities' sites or on the documents section of local authorities' sites. The evaluators highlighted Bath and North East Somerset as having an approach to accessibility which in their view embodied a number of good practice principles in addition to the community strategy having a Crystal Mark for 'plain english'. The principles used to communicate the strategy are:

- Accessible from the local authority web page.
- Available in Word and PDF formats on the web.
- Available in audio.
- Available in different community languages (ODPM, 2005d: 18).

The use of evidence in strategies

4.42 The community strategies evaluation was rather more critical of efforts by localities in making best use of evidence and targets and linking the strategy to proposed actions. Drawing on a random but representative sample of 50 community strategies the evaluators found that few community strategies included sufficient material in their documents to suggest whether evidence had been used appropriately to derive the strategy and related actions (ODPM, 2005d).

4.43 According to the community strategy evaluation evidence in community strategies was used for three broad purposes: to set a local context, to identify how conditions might have changed, and to suggest that certain issues were more important than others. At the same time the evaluators found that evidence was not always used robustly to inform the community strategy and action plan; instead 'broad statements' replaced clear analysis.

4.44 The evaluators questioned the emphasis placed on evidence from household surveys in community strategies, indicating that this may lead to a misrepresentation of local priorities. For example, considerable weight was attached to reported levels of the 'fear of crime', even when secondary data revealed that actual crime was very low and falling. The evaluators did identify examples where they believed that evidence was being used robustly. Local authority areas cited include Wandsworth, Croydon and Ryedale. These were viewed positively by the evaluators because the localities had made use of a range of data including local consultation/household data, secondary data, and had also made some attempt at modelling the direction the local area was taking.

4.45 The evaluators found that larger authorities and those with NRF support made more use of secondary data sources, such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation or the sources required to set Floor Targets. Where this array of data was considered, the evaluators considered that community strategies were more likely to reflect a wider range of local public service priorities rather than just focusing on issues raised through community consultation.

4.46 One source of evidence that the evaluators considered to be largely absent from the community strategies was evidence of past practice and work; no references being made to local evaluation evidence to promote 'what works' in priority setting.

4.47 The evaluation of community strategies highlighted the following as the main weaknesses in the use of evidence in community strategies:

- Actions defined without targets or evidence: for example, one strategy contained actions for finding routes out of prostitution for women and for reducing domestic violence, but all the crime targets related to vehicle crime, robbery and burglary.
- Little or no benchmark data used: for example comparing the area to regional or national averages, or benchmarking against a similar area.
- The absence of benchmarks against which progress could be measured.
- Strategies that made assertions and set priorities with no evidence that these were genuine issues facing the area. There was often an unclear link between the evidence presented and the priorities and actions.
- The quality of baselines varied between priorities. Some had a robust evidence base (e.g. education or crime) but others were more speculative (e.g. the economy). Many strategies had problems in defining robust health indicators, particularly those that could provide a more meaningful indication of progress than long lead time indicators such as life expectancy or standardised mortality rates for cancer and heart disease (ODPM, 2005d: 24).

Action plans and strategies

4.48 The community strategies evaluation identified a variety of approaches to determining actions in localities (ODPM, 2005d). In some cases community strategies included detailed action plans which outlined precisely the nature of actions which would be undertaken. For example, the evaluators cite Croydon community strategy which outlined approximately 150 separate actions. In other cases evaluators found that strategies included only a few actions. The evaluators

also reported differences in what kinds of actions an action plan should contain; should it for example contain all the actions contributing to an objective that might be undertaken by all partners, or should it only include those key priority actions that the LSP as opposed to individual partners should work on? There were also differences in what constituted action in different community strategies. From the material in the community strategies the evaluators defined actions as including the following: preparing further strategies; gathering more evidence; forming a partnership; and achieving a target.

Targets and strategies

4.49 The community strategies evaluation found that most localities set targets which closely followed central government policy objectives, PSA targets and floor targets, particularly in NRF areas (ODPM, 2005d). Other targets concerned process outcomes or outputs rather than outcomes (examples given included, gathering evidence, forming a partnership, reclaiming land).

4.50 The evaluators reported difficulty in working out which targets were realistic and which were not, as they found that few community strategies and action plans contained sufficient data (baselines, trend data) to enable such judgements to be made. The evaluators also concluded that localities were weak at establishing a monitoring framework that would enable robust assessments of progress in delivering the community strategy to be made. Frequently this was an aspect of their work that localities recorded as being under development.

4.51 Overall the community strategy evaluation reported a number of major weaknesses in the way in which community strategies approached target setting and assessment:

- No timings attached to the achievement of targets - though an assumption that they will be achieved in the lifetime of the action plan.
- An absence of baseline data meaning that there is no clear starting point for an action and no sense of the scale of the task.
- Some targets relate both to broad aims and to specific activities. More work is needed to identify appropriate outcome indicators.
- Some targets aim to achieve an increase or decrease in a particular indicator. Often change levels are not quantified.
- Some aspects of the Community Strategy are clearly difficult to quantify as there may be no readily available sets of data. These aspects typically refer to public or business satisfaction levels which require additional primary data collection. The sources of this data should be set out in Community Strategies but frequently are not (ODPM, 2005d: 33).

Policy Integration

4.52 The community strategies evaluation was critical of most community strategies for the lack of attention they paid to integrating EU and central government policies into their strategies (ODPM, 2005d). The evaluators reported that most community strategies only took account of central government policy via the inclusion of centrally determined targets, or by reference to specific policy initiatives such as Sure Start or New Deal for Communities, or as a result of including particular organisations in the achievement of key goals, e.g. Job Centre Plus or Primary Care Trusts.

Northumberland

Under each theme national/EU policies or initiatives that have direct relevance to the county - where there is at least one local example of that scheme in progress - are listed. An appendix lists the major strategies and plans that link to the Community Strategy. Some of these are national plans and strategies such as the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, but most are regional, sub-regional or county versions of a nationwide service, for example Business Link and Sport England.

Barnsley

Using national, regional and sub-regional policies as context:
Utilising agreements, compacts, Public Service Agreements with Government departments and compliance with floor targets; Joint working with local and sub-regional branches of statutory agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and Groundwork.

North Tyneside

All nine priorities or domains in the strategy include a section headed 'What guides us'. This has some references to regional and national policy. The Community Strategy seeks to link into a wide range of other strategies and plans, and to recognise the work of partner organisations. It also highlights the relevance of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy to each priority.

Wandsworth, London Borough

Each objective clearly outlines key areas of government policy and the resources already in the district. For each theme of the strategy there is a section of section considering and prioritising the relative importance of different policy areas.

Corby

Some central government policies are addressed under each theme within the key partners and activities section of the strategy. They identify how the policies will be linked into the theme's activities mainly through initiatives on the group such as Sure Start and Education Action Zones.

(Source: ODPM, 2005d: 54)

4.53   The evaluators identified one community strategy – Wandsworth – that made particular reference to the way in which it was responding to central government policy. For the evaluators:

> *"The general conclusion is that community strategies primarily reflect local issues, use central government targets to structure the setting of local target setting and then made limited and partial reference to government policies, agencies and initiatives"* (ODPM, 2005d:41).

4.54 The central government policies that were more specifically referenced in community strategies pertained to health, community safety, education and regeneration. The evaluators were able to point to a selection of localities that, they considered, demonstrated 'good practice' in incorporating both central government and EU policies in their community strategies (Figure 3).

Cross-cutting themes

4.55 The community strategies evaluation found that cross-cutting themes were identified in about half of the community strategies they examined 9ODPM, 2005d). They tended to be presented as horizontal priorities across the strategies' themes or core principles of the community strategy. The most common cross-cutting themes the evaluators identified were:

4.56 Sustainability (including environmental sustainability): in 91% of community strategies. Examples cited by the community strategies evaluation include:

- Barnsley: specific projects and activities around public transport, a town centre living project, improvement to parks and recreational spaces and through introducing sustainable design principles.
- Liverpool: sustainability is a principle of the strategy and there is a commitment to take forward the Local Agenda 21 strategy.
- Wigan: the fourth principle is sustainable development (ODPM, 2005d:46)

4.57 Equality and Diversity: this was usually considered in relation to black and minority ethnic groups, disability and age. Less than half the strategies studied by the evaluators highlighted gender inequality as an issue to focus on. Those that did either contained a broad statement about social inclusion (which mentioned specific groups of men or women who may be excluded) or identified specific initiatives to combat some form of exclusion such as addressing differential educational performance, support to young mothers into education and employment; and tackling domestic violence (ODPM, 2005d:46). The evaluators reported that some community strategies set out principles of equality and social inclusion which sought to promote equality of opportunity regardless of age, gender, ability, race and sexual orientation. However, their assessment revealed that measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation were least common.

4.58 Equality issues for black and minority ethnic groups also tended to be considered either as a principle or through specific initiatives. The community strategies evaluation cited Blackburn as one example of where race equality issues were identified clearly in the community strategy - substantial parts of two priorities were concerned with equality and diversity of black and minority ethnic groups. In other areas the evaluators identified community strategies focusing on specific initiatives, for example highlighting better inter-agency working and recognising that poverty might impact most severely on particular groups. The evaluators found that community strategies appeared to give most attention to race equality issues in areas with significant black and minority ethnic populations. By contrast in many rural areas race equality issues appeared as less of a priority in community strategies (ODPM, 2005d: 47).

4.59 The community strategies evaluation reported that age equality issues tended to be addressed through specific initiatives. Examples included the promotion of employment opportunities for older groups and support for older people to promote independent living (ODPM, 2005d: 48).

4.60 The community strategies evaluation identified that disability issues were primarily addressed in two ways: support for disabled people (which in some areas included those with learning difficulties) to enter employment and through the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act (particularly in relation to accessibility issues) (ODPM, 2005d:48).

Social Inclusion

4.61 The community strategy evaluation found some overlap between this and coverage of equality issues (see above). In some community strategies the evaluators highlighted coverage of community cohesion. For example, in the evaluators reported that in Barnsley activities to underpin community cohesion included: the strengthening of the capacity of community groups, increasing the number of volunteers, the establishment of area forums, the development of community partnerships, community summits, neighbourhood wardens and the development of youth summits (ODPM, 2005d:45).

4.62 The relative lack of coverage of cross cutting issues in community strategies compared with themes reflect the tension that exists between strategic, cross-cutting issues and the more functional planning of agencies which local partnerships have had difficulty in reconciling (e.g. equality, sustainability).

Mainstreaming, Joining-up and Prioritisation

4.63 The community strategies evaluation found no evidence that community strategies were seen as documents to help mainstream practice across agencies. Instead they reported that community strategies were more likely to be seen as documents that would help join-up activities across agencies and to set some broad goals for the local area (ODPM, 2005d).

Good practice in strategy making

4.64 The community strategies evaluation suggests that 'the more coherent community strategies and action plans' have the following in common:

- Clearly set priorities by a functioning LSP.
- Review and analysis of evidence to clarify and focus the aims and objectives of priorities.
- Actions which are clearly shown to address the priorities, aims and objectives of the community strategy.
- Targets which are clearly defined: containing baselines, are time bound and are specific.
- Clear identification of who has overall responsibility for the achievement of which target. This last is considered important by the evaluators as it 'may help in providing leadership to a particular theme, the resources to collect evidence and to set targets, and to develop realistic actions' (ODPM, 2005d: 32-33).

Delivering the Community Strategy

4.65 The final report of the LSP evaluation (ODPM/DfT, 2006) argues that to date LSPs have been more involved in the design rather than the delivery of community strategies and local neighbourhood renewal strategies. In part the evaluators suggested this reflected ambiguity about the role of the LSP – was it a delivery body? In part it reflected a lack of capacity in the LSP to undertake delivery, and in part it reflected uncertainty amongst respondents about the utility of the community strategy. While some respondents perceived the community strategy as a 'sound framework' for strategic action, others still considered it a woolly irrelevance. The evaluators concluded that:

> *"The key issue appears to be whether the coming generation of community strategies and local neighbourhood renewal strategies will move up a gear to provide a more explicit, targetable and measurable basis for joint action and whether it will provide the basis for any resource realignment. Even in the most advanced examples within the evaluation progress on shifting the pattern of resources of reshaping mainstream delivery has been limited, and there is little evidence that community strategies/local neighbourhood renewal strategies are widely owned beyond the immediate stakeholders, or that as yet they offer legitimacy for serious service change"* (ODPM/DfT, 2006:80).

4.66 To date few LSPs have made substantial progress in shifting the priorities and resource and planning mechanisms of main service delivery organisations. In those areas that have moved forward, evaluators have identified strong leadership and engaged middle management as key features that support this progress (ODPM/DfT, 2005).

4.67 A key question that runs through the evaluations of LSPs and community strategies in England concerns the meaning of 'delivery'. For some respondents the question is a false one, LSPs are non-executive bodies, with no power to deliver anything, beyond the production of a strategic framework or community strategy. Delivery occurs through the actions of specific organisations, partnerships or initiatives that may be enabled by the strategic framework the LSP/community strategy provides, but are not dependent on them. For others the act of enabling or facilitation is part of delivery - the provision of a strategic framework and the ongoing direction of the LSP constantly checks and steers the activity of those who are partners in the LSP and may also act to encourage new approaches to service design within and between organisations. In some cases the LSP itself might seek to commission or initiate activity that is not undertaken by any existing organisation, partnership or initiative, but has been identified as a key priority by LSP partners.

4.68 The national evaluation of LSPs considers 'delivery' by reference to progress in relation to three sets of outcomes: process, governance and service outcomes (ODPM/DfT, 2006).

- Process outcomes include: understanding partners' priorities, mapping partners' spending programmes, sharing data and information, sharing staff resources, pooling budgets, levering in resources, joint funding of projects. In its final report the LSP evaluation found that most LSPs reported least progress in

mapping spending and pooling budgets but reasonable progress in relation to the other outcomes. NRF areas were likely to report better progress than non-NRF but even so, overall progress was relatively limited (ODPM/DfT 2006).

• Governance outcomes include: the development of a collective vision and agreed strategy; widening the range of interests involved in decision making, bringing marginalised social groups into decision making, building a stronger and more united local voice, achieving greater legitimacy in the eyes of the community, innovation and dissemination of good practice, more effective influence on council decisions, more effective influence on regional and national issues. Its final report noted that LSPs reported making most progress in relation to establishing a collective vision and strategy. Some progress was reported in relation to the other outcomes, though not exercising effective influence on regional and national issues. Again NRF areas reported more progress than non-NRF but still relatively conservative in their assessment of their achievements.

Overall the evaluators reported that LSPs are seen to have offered a single voice for the expression of views, a closer relationship with communities, a capacity to focus on issues and problems and to develop evidence to generate a better understanding, an opportunity to network, and an opportunity for individuals to develop skills. However as was reported in the LSPs 'governance' action learning set, improvements were considered fragile (ODPM, 2004b). For the evaluators:

> *"The challenge is to create LSPs that are flexible and swift to act - and are seen as sufficiently transparent and legitimate to win public support. The answer does not lie in a new bureaucracy but in creating spaces for diversity, dialogue and creativity" (ODPM/DfT, 2006:101).*

• Service outcomes include: ensuring community strategy priorities are reflected in partners' plans, services delivered better to meet community needs, services which better meet needs in priority neighbourhoods, meeting floor targets. The evaluation records that LSPs claim much less progress here than in relation to other outcomes though NRF LSPs do better. Most progress is claimed in relation to crime and those aspects of policy that are associated with floor targets. Some issues are not really tackled at all and the evaluators highlight aspects of equalities' issues here.

4.69 The LSP evaluation asked respondents to identify the 'added value' of LSP activity. The evaluators recorded positive responses to this, particularly in relation to governance issues. However, some respondents were sceptical about what could be claimed here, prompting the evaluators to argue for a performance management framework that would allow LSPs to come to their own judgements about added value. The evaluators suggest that it may be more appropriate and productive to examine the incidence of 'proportionate value', that is judging outcomes in relation to resource investment required of LSPs to achieve these outcomes.

4.70 While NRF LSPs were reported to have performed better in relation to all outcomes than non-LSPs, the evaluators were anxious to point out that their analysis revealed that such differences were not primarily a result of the resources allocated to NRF LSPs. Instead they argued that other factors were more significant, namely the status and maturity of the LSP in the locality. (ODPM/DfT, 2006:107).

4.71   In 2005 the national evaluation of LSPs reported that 'leading edge' LSPs were making progress in shifting priorities and altering mainstream behaviour, but concluded that for many LSPs 'mainstreaming' was a major challenge (ODPM/ DfT, 2005). It identified two forms of 'mainstreaming' in localities. 'Strategic mainstreaming' is the refocusing of mainstream programmes (and mainstream funding) onto targets agreed and shared by local partners, reflecting the pattern of local needs. 'Initiative mainstreaming' describes a "bottom up" approach, the aim of which is to spread approaches and learning from localised, short-term pilots, frequently on the periphery of mainstream services, to mainstream programmes; and to achieve sustainable funding for these pilots. The final LSP evaluation report (ODPM/DfT, 2006) reiterates that progress on mainstreaming remains slow, in citing limited central government discretion, lack of understanding of local spending patterns and resistant organisational cultures as key barriers.

4.72   As in the interim LSP report, the final report reiterates the importance of elected members, senior officers and middle managers as the key to success in mainstreaming activity. The key issues identified by the evaluators as holding elected members back from participating in mainstreaming activity include the fear that their role as community leaders might be damaged or diluted through increased activity by the LSP. The importance of middle managers to mainstream change is rooted in their pivotal position in organisations - at the point where change in service practices is operationalised and where contrary tensions will impact. The LSP evaluation identifies crime and disorder reduction partnerships as good examples of leadership in delivering change to the mainstream. It argues that they are successful because they are long established, have a statutory role, are outcome driven, have designated lead organisations, are active bidders for money, and have common performance concerns amongst partners (ODPM/ DfT, 2006).

Performance Management

4.73   As indicated above performance management remains a key challenge for community strategies and LSPs. Evaluations of community strategies and LSPs report that while localities are developing approaches to performance management, many are still at an early stage and are finding it difficult to move from performance monitoring to the active management of performance (ODPM/DfT, 2005, ODPM, 2005f). The pressure to generate robust performance management systems for community strategies and LSPs has become more pronounced with the 'roll out' of Local Area Agreements across English authorities.

4.74   As early work in the LSP evaluation indicated, performance managing a LSP is different from the task in a single organisation. Indicators are hard to agree and outcome focussed management remains relatively less advanced (ODPM, 2004c). Recent work on Local Public Service Agreements in England has stimulated greater understanding of outcomes (their definition, determination, measurement and management) and this is likely to continue to be stimulated by the development of Local Area Agreements (ODPM, 2005g). In the final LSP evaluation report (ODPM/DfT, 2006) performance management was understood as: monitoring/ managing the delivery of LSPs strategies and plans, assessing the effectiveness of

partnership working, as an aid to improvement planning, and to identifying added value. The benefits of performance management were considered by respondents to be: clarifying strategic objectives, closer alignment of plans and priorities, providing an evidence base for improvement and identifying where improvement was needed.

Figure 4:   Approaches to Performance Management

The approach developed by one LSP (acknowledged to be a good model) includes the community strategy (with aims and key performance measures for each of the priority themes); partnership agreements with them thematic partnerships; the quality of life report, which documents progress in each of the community strategy's key measures together with central government floor and LPSA targets; the annual reports of the thematic partnerships to the partnership board; LSP development days to review qualitative aspects of partnership performance; communications (officer link group bringing together staff supporting the thematic partnerships, the partnership newsletter and website); and board agendas and community strategy (with items on the agenda link to community strategy themes) and reporting procedures (with standardised reports). The PMF is regularly reviewed and individual thematic partnerships are encouraged to modify targets (with justification) in the annual reporting system. The 'monitoring quality of life' document is important for bringing together all the different targets and performance measures (community strategy, LPSA and central government floor targets).

(Source: ODPM/DfT, 2006:51)

4.75   The key problems reported by respondents in relation to performance management concerned data gathering (access, resourcing and interpretation), as well as the fact that different organisations will have different views about the value of and approach to performance management based on their own experiences. An example of performance management in a LSP was included in the report and is reproduced here (Figure 4). In addition to the practical questions, another issue was raised by respondents about the nature of what is being performance managed and whether LSPs - large, complex bodies, not single organisations but voluntary networks operating by consent and not command - should be performance managed.

Governance and Accountability

4.76   Evaluation evidence suggests that the role of the local authority is probably the most important local factor in the success of the LSP and community strategy. Local authorities are important for the community leadership role they play in providing infrastructure support for the operation of the LSP and the development of the community strategy, and in ensuring 'good governance' of the activities of the LSP and the delivery of the community strategy. However, as has been indicated above, local authorities need to be able to strike a fine balance between leading and dominating LSPs and community strategy working.

4.77   A key question pertaining to partnerships generally and LSPs in particular, concerns accountability. Initial findings from the LSP evaluation suggested that accountability was considered to rest with the local authority

(ODPM/DfT, 2006). This has been confirmed in the ODPM consultation paper on LSPs which emphasises the local authorities' central role in both driving and being accountable for the actions of the LSP (ODPM, 2005a). This presents important challenges for local authorities and elected members in ensuring that they have the mechanisms in place to hold the LSP to account and the legitimacy with local stakeholders to be able to act as the accountable body. A recent audit commission report has highlighted some of the challenges facing local authorities as well as identifying some ways in which they may be able to respond to these challenges (Audit Commission, 2005).

4.78   The kinds of governance arrangements that may be appropriate for an individual LSP will depend very much on the purpose of the LSP. The Governance action learning set held as part of the national evaluation of LSPs identified four kinds of LSP (ideal types). It argued that few LSPs will operate entirely in any one mode, but the balance between them varies widely. None of the modes is inherently better than any other; each can have 'strong' versions that work well, and 'weak' versions that do not work well. The four types are:

• **Advisory:** the LSP acts as a consultation and discussion forum and often forms the basis for consensus building, but has no independent power to act. It draws its accountability and legitimacy entirely from member organisations, particularly the local authority.
• **Commissioning:** the LSP has its own staff and authority, is able to implement decisions and commission projects, and therefore has to create its own forms of accountability and legitimacy.
• **Laboratory:** the prime focus is on generating new ideas and new ways of designing local services, drawing on the combined thinking of senior managers and community leaders.
• **Community empowerment:** attention is focused on creating strong networks within the community rather than on the key public agencies.

4.79   The action learning set concluded that each mode raises different governance issues, and the right governance approach depends on the balance between the modes. The action learning set proposed a series of questions for any LSP to ask itself to help develop the right governance structures: questions about purpose, membership, rules of engagement, accountability, scrutiny, roles and outcomes, delivery and ways of working (ODPM/DfT, 2005).

4.80   Important unresolved issues reported in the final LSP evaluation report in 2006 included the identification of the appropriate relationship between sub-groups of the LSP and the executive. Identifying the role of both, for example, does the executive 'drive the sub-groups' or is it just a forum where independent sub-group activity is 'badged' and legitimised, and how to ensure that theme groups don't become alternative silos but are connected to each other, were important issues that many LSPs were wrestling with. The evaluation concluded that good practice was derived from relationships managed through clearly understood partnership agreements (ODPM/DfT, 2006). Evaluation evidence suggests that partnership rationalisation has been limited despite early optimism that the development of LSPs could reduce the number of partnerships in a locality. In fact the LSP evaluation reported that the dynamic policy context had given rise to more partnerships rather than less (ODPM/DfT, 2006).

4.81 The community strategies evaluation (ODPM, 2005d) found that most community strategies neglected spatial issues in their strategies, and few proposed area based activity or targeting resources at particular areas as part of their action plan. The LSP evaluation highlighted the potential significance of 'Below the LSP' relationships in its reports (ODPM/DfT, 2006, Sullivan and Howard, 2005). These can provide a forum in which sub-local interests come together and represent their shared interests, however, it is important that the duplication of LA/LSP arrangements is avoided and that councillors are involved fully. Such arrangements are also likely to have implications for the 'voluntary' engagement of communities and voluntary organisations and will need resourcing.

4.82 Community strategies were also considered to have underplayed the significance of *regional issues* with very few community strategies paying attention to regional economic or spatial strategies, beyond identifying regional bodies as sources for future resource streams to support economic activity (ODPM, 2005d). The poor linkages with regional economic strategies were reflected in the LSP evaluation which identified the same poor links between LSPs and regional economic strategies. The evaluators concluded that greater clarity was needed about what kinds of linkages were possible and the particular roles and purposes of different bodies in such a complex 'institutional soup' (ODPM/DfT, 2006).

Virtuous and Vicious Circles

4.83 The national evaluation of LSPs proposes that the variation in progress by LSPs in England can be understood by reference to the incidence of 'virtuous and vicious circles' (ODPM/DfT, 2006: 116-118). The former summarises what the evaluation found to be the main drivers of progress for LSPs, while the latter brings together the barriers that can act to reinforce each other and prevent or limit the development of LSPs.

Virtuous circles comprise:

- Positive local context.
- Partners willing to be engaged.
- Effective local leadership, from the local authority and key partners (including the VCS), contributing to sense of collective leadership.
- LSP staff team with capacity to communicate with range of stakeholders, establish inclusive and efficient LSP infrastructure, set up and operate robust performance management arrangements.
- Sufficient resources to run the LSP (from range of partners).
- LSP that leads the development of the community strategy and ensures that it adds value and drives partner activity.
- Progress that can be attributed to LSP and generates rationale for sustaining LSP into longer term.

Vicious circles comprise:

- Negative local context.
- Superficial commitment of partners.
- Ineffective local leadership - dominant or weak local authority, other partners unwilling to invest in leading.

- LSP 'rubberstamps' community strategy and it has no impact in driving mainstream change in locality.
- Inadequate staffing and resources - too little and too reliant on local authority.
- No focus on performance management, so no real idea of whether/ how change is occurring.
- LSP not identified with progress - instead considered 'talking shop' which is not sustainable over time.

4.84 The evaluators argue that each cycle does not 'lock LSPs in' to positive progress or negative action. Instead they argue that it is possible for LSPs to 'break in' to the virtuous circle and 'break out' of the vicious circle at different points. What is important is that local actors appreciate the different trajectories promised by different combinations of factors and understand how strength in some areas can help to overcome/or be overcome by weaknesses in others.

Guidance and Learning Support

4.85 Attitudes towards government guidance vary. The community strategies evaluation reported that the guidance offered in support of community strategies was largely followed by localities, though few made mention of it. The rather less extensive guidance made available to support LSPs evoked greater reaction, with many respondents welcoming the freedom offered by such simple 'hands off' guidance, but others concerned at the lack of prescription (compared to that in the community strategies guidance).

4.86 Additional support has also been made available to LSPs and community strategies. This includes activity funded by the ODPM and the Local Government Association's capacity building programme which supports 'improvement partnerships' - regional partnerships aiming to improve internal capacity to act. The ODPM's neighbourhood renewal unit offers: an LSP delivery toolkit, provides advice on strategy design and delivery; supports neighbourhood renewal advisors who can provide bespoke advice to LSPs; offers support in generating evidence and data for action plans, provides guidance on neighbourhood statistics (via ONS), area profiles and Quality of Life (via the audit commission); and facilitates targeted support for 'weak' LSPs (those that are NRF funded and assessed as weak by NRU). Other bodies provide 'peer challenge and critical friend reviews' of LSPs, e.g. SOLACE, Warwick Business School and IDeA.

4.87 Other support has been provided as part of some of the ongoing national evaluations of the LGMA. Action Learning Sets were a key component of the LSP evaluation (sets were run on issues including strategy making, performance, governance, community involvement), and contributed to wider learning via the publication of 'issue papers' or 'guidance materials' that came from the deliberations of the individual sets.

4.88 Other evaluations have also developed a range of materials to meet the needs of particular interests; these range from guides that concentrate on working out an approach to a particular issue or problem to more punchy 'briefing papers' or more reflective 'issue papers'. Materials are published on the ODPM website, and in some cases web based materials and interactions are facilitated as part of the evaluation programme. Both the English LGA and the IDeA provided guidance

materials on the web as well as running web based discussion forums on different aspects of community strategies and/or LSPs.

Experiences in Scotland

4.89   In comparing experience in Scotland with that in Wales and England there are three significant differences that are immediately apparent. The first is that in Scotland, although the legislation requiring local authorities to engage in community planning and to produce community plans did not come into being until 2003, there was a long gestation period during which there was much local and national discussion, research and piloting of the ideas that were ultimately to form the basis of legislation. The starting point of this process was the establishment in 1997 of a joint Scottish Executive and COSLA (the Scottish equivalent of the WLGA) working group on community planning. There was thus a period of approximately 6 years of debate and experimentation before the legislation was passed.

4.90   The second significant difference is that the main partnership mechanism for organising community planning (a Local Strategic Partnership in England, a Community Strategy Partnership in Wales and a Community Planning Partnership in Scotland) was a constituent part of the legislation on community planning in Scotland, whereas in England it was developed through a separate policy process. The consequence of this is that that in Scotland there is a more consistent basis for the relationship between the process (community planning), the partnership mechanism (Community Planning Partnership) and the product (a Community Plan) than is often the case in England.

4.91   The third significant difference is in the legislative basis for community planning. There are certain differences in the content of the legislation (which are dealt with below) and there is also a difference in the legislative process. Quite obviously, Scottish legislation is developed in Scotland by a Scottish Parliament for implementation in Scotland. Legislation for Wales is produced primarily in England for England. Although there was undoubtedly some important Welsh influence on the content of the Local Government Act 2000 it is likely that the difference in process may result in differences in understanding, interpretation and commitment.

Legislative Differences

4.92   While there are many similarities between the Scottish and the Welsh/ English legislation there are also differences that some people consider are significant. The overall legal framework, contained in Part 2 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 is as follows:

- A duty is placed on councils to initiate, facilitate and maintain the Community Planning process. This includes a requirement to engage local community and voluntary organisations and to encourage a range of other organisations to participate in the process.
- Local authorities are required to report to their communities on their implementation of Community Planning.
- A duty is placed on other key public bodies to participate in the process. This is the most obvious and frequently referred to difference between

the Scottish and the Welsh/English legislation. The bodies on which this duty is placed are: Health Boards; Joint Police Boards; Chief Constables; Scottish Enterprise; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority; Joint Fire Boards. Subsequently, the recently created Regional Transport Partnerships have also had a duty placed on to participate (Transport (Scotland) Act 2005).

- There is also an explicit duty placed on Scottish Ministers (through the Scottish Executive and its agencies such as Communities Scotland) to promote and encourage Community Planning.
- Ministers are given powers to issue guidance and those involved in the process are required to have regard for that guidance.
- Ministers are also given powers to establish corporate bodies to co-ordinate Community Planning in a given local authority area.

4.93   As is the case in England and Wales, the provisions relating to Community Planning in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 are linked to the provision of a Well-Being power. The details of the power, expressed as a 'power to advance well-being' are contained in part 3 of the Act and are broadly similar to those in England and Wales.

4.94   With regard to the duty placed on other key public bodies to participate in the community planning process it is important to note the following points:

- There is no research evidence that we can find that demonstrates the effect that this duty has. Anecdotally there appears to be a strong belief that the provision of the duty has generally had a positive effect. But there is also an awareness that the duty may be more symbolic than practical in its effect. 'Participation' is a broad concept that cannot easily be translated into specific behaviours and actions - it can be real and committed or it may be tokenistic.
- There is, however, a strong belief that the concept of a legal duty to co-operate is valuable. This was perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the widespread support for extending the duty to the newly established Regional Transport Authorities that emerged from the pre-legislative consultation for the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005.
- It is important to note that a duty is also placed on Scottish Ministers to promote and encourage Community Planning. There are strong views expressed within local government that Ministers, the Scottish Executive and its agencies may have, as yet, done relatively little to fulfil this duty. If this view is correct then some doubt arises about the efficacy of any such duty. If the duty cannot be enforced at the local level it may have little practical value.

Scottish Executive Guidance and Advice Notes

4.95   The Scottish Executive produced detailed Guidance on Part 2 of the 2003 Act in the spring of 2004 (Scottish Executive, 2004a). The most important difference between the Scottish and Welsh guidance is that while the latter relies quite heavily on the previously prepared guidance for English authorities, the Scottish guidance is more original in its content and approach, very much reflecting Scottish legislation and circumstances. The Scottish Guidance is also different in so far as, following the spirit of the Scottish Act, it also focuses on the 'process of community planning' rather than on the 'preparation of community strategies'.

4.96 At about the same time (March 2004), the Scottish Executive also published a set of 9 'Advice Notes' that drew in large part on the work of the Community Planning Task Force and the Community Planning Implementation Group (see below for further information) (Scottish Executive, 2004b). The advice notes were extensive (amounting to approximately 100 pages) and were intended to support community planning rather than to direct it. They were based on the following topics:

- National Framework: National Priorities.
- Partnership Models and Structures.
- Involving the Private Sector.
- Effective Partnership Working.
- Effective Community Engagement.
- Building Organisational Capacity.
- The Role of Elected and Board Member.
- Information Sharing.
- Performance Monitoring and Management.

Historical Development of Community Planning in Scotland

Scottish Executive and COSLA Working Group

4.97 This working group, set up in 1997, can be seen as the genesis not just for the subsequent legislation on community planning, but also as a focus of a broader debate on newly emerging ideas on community leadership and governance. Of greatest importance however was that it contained representatives of both national and local government and was of some significance in helping to shape the future role of local government within the context of the newly created Scottish Parliament and Executive. The Working Group was an active force in the early development of community planning, holding conferences and collecting and making available evidence of developments in individual local authorities. The Working Group set up the first 'pathfinder projects'.

The Community Planning Pathfinder Projects

4.98 The projects were set up in 1998 in Edinburgh, Highland, Perth and Kinross, South Lanarkshire and Stirling. They were asked to produce Community Plans by December 1999 - an ambition that ultimately proved unrealistic. Nonetheless they did make some progress in setting up their community planning arrangements and a conference that was held in March agreed that the projects should be formally evaluated. The School of Public Policy at the University of Birmingham was commissioned to undertake a very limited form of evaluation, the main conclusions of which included the following points:

- The timescales set for developing a full community strategy process were unrealistically short.
- Developing the community leadership role in a period of political uncertainty was particularly difficult.
- The pathfinders tended to adopt a pragmatic approach, basing their processes on existing initiatives.

- The dominant approaches pursued by the pathfinders were the development of partnerships and of a shared strategic vision. There was relatively less evidence of the implementation of processes of community consultation and engagement, although these were in the process of being developed. (Rogers, Smith, Sullivan and Clarke, 2000)

Community Planning Task Force (CPTF)

4.99 The CPTF was set up in March 2001 and remained in operation until April 2003 when the community planning provisions of the Local Government in Scotland 2003 came into force. With a membership of over 20 representatives from the Scottish Executive, national public agencies such as Audit Scotland, local government, other local public services (e.g. police and health), the voluntary sector, trade unions and academic institutions, it was chaired initially by Professor Alice Brown of Edinburgh University and latterly by Willie Rae the Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police.

4.100 CPTF was active on a number of fronts, establishing working groups on particular topics, commissioning research and consultancy projects, making information available, establishing a national website (which remains in existence and makes available not only information of its own but also provides links to many other sources of information (www.communityplanning.org.uk)) and holding seminars and conferences. The Task Force provided an important focus for the development and implementation of the concept of community planning at a time when there was a real danger that it would be submerged in the flood of other policy and planning initiatives that were emerging from the Scottish Executive.

4.101 The final report of CPTF concluded that, while Community Planning offered an ideal mechanism for linking national and local priorities, it faced a number of future challenges. CPTF's eleven recommendations in relation to these challenges included:

- Community planning partnerships should commit themselves to all or most of the key priorities of the Scottish Executive, which should in turn give the partnerships adequate space to address local needs and priorities.
- Community planning partnerships (with support from the Scottish Executive, COSLA and Communities Scotland) should develop the capacity of communities to engage in community planning. Capacity building within the organisations involved in the community planning partnerships was also required.
- The Scottish Executive and Community Planning partnerships should commit themselves to driving forward the process of partnership rationalisation at all levels of government.
- Community planning partnerships should recognise information sharing to support Community planning as a key priority and, working with the Scottish Executive and other agencies, should take all practical steps to the removal of barriers. (CPTF, 2003)

Community Planning Implementation Group (CPIG)

4.102 The Group was established in April 2003 for a period of 12 months to support the implementation of community planning by taking forward the main recommendations of the Community Planning Task Force (CPTF). Its remit was:

- To maintain progress in the implementation and development of community planning
- To raise the profile of community planning
- To provide guidance and promote good practice in community planning
- To provide an independent focus to the process

4.103 CPIG's final report reviewed the progress that had been made in relation to CPTF's eleven recommendations. While the review was generally favourable, identifying numerous areas of progress and development, there was also recognition that, if the potential of community planning was to be realised, there was a need for continuing high level leadership and championing of the concept and the development of a network of practitioners to explore and develop issues and ideas. (CPIG, 2004)

Research on Community Planning

4.104 Following the initial research on the 'Pathfinders' referred to above, there has been a steady stream of research and advisory reports on community planning commissioned by the CPTF. These have included The Geddes Institute (2001), Stevenson (2002) and Eglington (2003). (A full list of the CPTS and CPIG commissioned reports can be found on the Community Planning website – www.communityplanning.org.uk)

4.105 Apart from the CPTF reports there have been several reports commissioned by Communities Scotland of which the most directly relevant was that by Michael Carley on community planning and local governance (Carley, 2004). The Public Health Institute for Scotland commissioned a more focused piece of research on the link between health improvement and community planning in one area (Knight et al, 2003). Key conclusions of the Communities Scotland report included:

- There is widespread enthusiasm for the potential of community planning amongst partners and community representatives, but a feeling that past models do not offer much guidance on how things might be done in the future.
- Local authorities should play a delicately balanced role in leading the community planning partnership towards independent functioning, gradually achieving a 'life of its own'.
- Strategy should be developed across a limited range of key priorities that reflect consensus on vision and expertise in the community planning partnership and providing value-added joined-up initiatives.
- That all those concerned with community planning should see themselves as part of a 'Scottish learning network' involving the development of a local and national learning and communications strategy (Carley, 2004).

4.106 Key conclusions of the Public Health Institute for Scotland report included:

- A clearer strategic framework is needed in order to assist the integration of health improvement within community planning.
- Despite the commitment to partnership generally by the public sector organisations involved, voluntary and community groups need to be treated as partners rather than as participants of a different status in the process.
- Operationalising strategic intent is a critical but problematic issue that requires the development of operational plans with clear targets and milestones and an integrated performance management process (Knight et al, 2003).

4.107 The most extensive piece of research into community planning in Scotland is currently taking place. It is an in-depth baseline study of community planning partnerships undertaken by Audit Scotland for the Accounts Commission. The aim of the project is to review progress made by councils and partner organisations in developing community planning since the enactment of the Local Government Act 2003 in Scotland. The project was set up with a number of specific objectives:

- To identify the composition, structures and governance arrangements of community planning partnerships (CPPs).
- To identify links between community planning and other planning arrangements for local authority and other planning arrangements for local authority and other agencies including regional or cross boundary initiatives and joint working arrangements.
- To examine the relationship between the Scottish Executive and CPPs, including the impact of the executive's decision-making processes on community planning.
- To identify the specific objectives and exact priorities set by CPPs and how these align with Scottish Executive's policy priorities and those of other organisations.
- To identify how CPPs measure their performance and all the evidence available about this.
- To examine the impact to date of community planning on local and regional service delivery.
- To review how CPPs engage with their local communities.
- To identify issues acting as barriers to community planning effectiveness.
- To determine the costs involved in community planning.

4.108 It is anticipated that the final report will be available in June 2006. However, COSLA has anticipated that the key findings will include:

- The fragmented nature of the Scottish Executive policy and funding arrangements are making it difficult for partnerships to achieve their full potential.
- Community planning partnerships are at different stages of development. The best progress has been achieved with strong leadership across partners, an agreement on priorities, a willingness to change patterns of working and arrangements to monitor performance.
- Performance management frameworks need developing with few partnerships having developed local indicators.
- Community engagement is progressing but it could be more sustained and systematic.
- Partnership structures need to be rationalised.

- Partnerships are helping to drive local action in national priority areas through thematic partnership groups - but there is wide variation in how this is done.
- An assessment framework for community planning partnerships effectiveness is needed and it may be helpful to audit the contribution of partner organisations.
- The development of community planning performance indicators is dependent on agreement of national targets for policy priorities and on agreement that Community planning partnerships will be accountable for delivering the targets (COSLA, 2005).

Information, Communication and Networking

4.109 Reference has already been made to the valuable work of the Community Planning Task Force and the Community Planning Implementation Group in communicating ideas and information about community planning. Other agencies such as Communities Scotland have also been active in developing and communicating ideas and information. The early establishment of a national website on community planning has also been noted as a very positive initiative. More recently, the Scottish Executive and COSLA have continued their joint encouragement for community planning with their support for the establishment of a new (2005) Community Planning Network for practitioners and a new community planning website (www.improvementservice.org.uk/commplan/)

Conclusion

4.110 The most important differences between the development of community planning in Scotland and the development of the community strategy process in Wales are:

- In Scotland, experimentation with community planning started much earlier in many local authorities - well in advance of the legislative requirement. This longer gestation period has allowed the build up of a body of experience that is helpful in undertaking further developments.
- In Scotland, key public sector organisations are required to contribute to the process. While this appears to be generally viewed as helpful there is little, as yet, explicit evidence as to the real impact of this aspect of the legislation.
- There is anecdotal evidence that in local government there is a view that the duty placed on Ministers to promote and encourage community planning has not been adequately fulfilled. We understand that this issue is likely to be a key aspect of the forthcoming report by Audit Scotland.
- There has been a long-term relationship between the Scottish Executive, COSLA and individual local authorities in developing the ideas that were ultimately reflected in the legislation. This has been helpful in many respects but has not resolved many of the center-local tensions that exist.
- In Scotland the existence of the Community Planning Task Force and then the Implementation Group have been important factors in ensuring a continuing focus on community planning at both the national and local level.
- In Scotland the provision of a purpose-designed website for community planning has been an important vehicle for making information widely available.

4.111 The concept of community planning appears to be seen in a positive light by many individuals and organisations that participate in the process in Scotland. But there is also an awareness that many barriers still exist to its more successful implementation. These barriers exist at local and national levels. They demonstrate that a highly aspirational and multi-purpose concept such as community planning is difficult to implement in the current governance context. Community planning requires a more radical shift of attitude and behaviour by many of the participants than has been either recognised or achieved.

Chapter 5   An Overview of Community Strategies in Wales

Introduction

5.1   This chapter has two purposes as follows:

Firstly, it examines the effectiveness of the organisational arrangements that have been put in place at both national and local levels to manage the preparation of community strategies. In particular, it considers the question of resourcing the community strategy process and the division of responsibilities between the Welsh Assembly, local government and others.

Secondly, it follows this with a brief overview of the progress that has been made throughout Wales on the preparation of community strategies together with an analysis of their key features.

Organisation and Management

National Level

5.2   The management of Community Strategies in the Welsh Assembly is undertaken within the Local Government Modernisation Division (now the Local Government Policy Division) alongside a number of other duties, functions and responsibilities. There is no single dedicated staff resource for this area of work, and it is subsumed within the broader portfolio of a Principal Officer including community and town councils, animal welfare issues, the power of well being and the evaluation of the modernisation agenda. With the exception of a 6 month period of secondment from a local government officer, administrative and policy support for this role has been provided from within the division.

5.3   At a political level, community strategy matters are reported to the Local Government and Public Services Committee and cabinet responsibility falls to the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services. An interrogation of the agendas and minutes of the Local Government and Public Services Committee reveals that reporting has been designed predominantly to track progress on the preparation of community strategies. In particular, two annual reports in 2004 and 2005 set out in detail the progress that had been made in each local authority area. The report in 2004 was based on telephone interviews and e-mails to community strategy officers, and its main findings were as follows:

- Noted common features in approach but also lack of innovation.
- Good progress has been made.
- Most authorities and their partners have adopted an inclusive approach in terms of partnership arrangements.
- Priorities and themes appear to be very similar throughout Wales.
- Existing partnership arrangements have been built upon.
- There are different approaches to area partnerships.
- Key organisations and the public have been fully engaged.
- Community strategy partnerships are facilitated by local authorities.

- Arrangements for preparing the strategies have involved relatively few staff situated mainly in corporate policy units.
- Funding issues are not referred to in the plans.

5.4　The progress report of 2005 was based on an internal desktop evaluation of the 21 adopted or draft strategies. It aimed to assess their compliance with Assembly guidance, the extent to which they integrated the Assembly's cross cutting priorities, and the extent to which they linked to Assembly's key strategies and partnerships. The report raised a number of policy issues as follows:

- The potential accountability and governance issues of area based forums/committees.
- The need for more guidance on effective participation and public engagement.
- The absence of joint working between neighbouring authorities and partnerships around community strategies runs counter to the Assembly's policies in Making the Connections and the Wales Spatial Plan.
- Although reference is made to cross cutting themes there is little evidence as to how the strategies and action plans intend to promote them.
- The degree of integration between strategies varies; UDPs and Communities First are two particular problem areas.
- Resourcing the preparation of community strategies is a problem which may have influenced their quality.

5.5　In addition to the reports above, the Local Government Partnership Council has considered reports of the community strategy process.

5.6　The Local Government Policy Division has been responsible for preparing the guidance on the preparation of community strategies. It has organised 4 seminars, set up a web site, produced a booklet to raise awareness of community strategies, and ensured that ASPB remit letters encourage effective engagement in the preparation and implementation of local community strategies. Assembly officials have met with their counterparts in the ODPM and the Scottish Executive to discuss approaches to community strategy practice in the respective countries, and the Division has been instrumental in setting up an internal officers group within the Welsh Assembly to consider proposals for plan rationalisation in local government.

5.7　The Division has been supported in its work on community strategies, originally by a Community Planning sub-group in 2001, but since that time by the Community Strategies Working Group which is constitutionally a sub-group of the Local Government Partnership Council. Its representation is diverse and intended to reflect a wide range of stakeholder interests from within the Assembly, local government, health, the voluntary sector, business, ASPBs, and other interests. Its original 2001 terms of reference was slightly amended in 2003 as a result of an internal review, and these are now as follows:

- Establish how community strategies relate to other strategies, plans and processes the Assembly requires local authority and partner bodies to produce.
- Track progress in preparing and implementing community strategies and evaluate progress against the Assembly's guidance.
- Provide further advice and guidance to local authorities.
- Promote training and capacity building.

- Identify and disseminate good practice.
- Encourage a corporate approach in partner organisations including Welsh Assembly Government.
- Review the terms of reference annually.

5.8   However, the value and effectiveness of the Community Strategies Working Group has been questioned during this evaluation both from within the group itself and from an external audience. The main areas for concern surfacing from the interviews with community strategy officers and their partners centre on their perception that there was a lack of output from the national working group particularly in relation to timely guidance, support, training and advice on community strategy matters in relation to implementation, good practice, public engagement and performance management; its lack of influence in relation to other Assembly divisions in achieving policy coherence between different areas and initiatives; and its low profile in general particularly outside the narrow community strategy community.

5.9   An internal review of the Community Strategies Working Group (December 2005) raised a number of concerns about the viability and future direction of the group. Evidence was presented on the ephemeral attendance of members at meetings, their lack of engagement in the development of the work of the group, and the under representation of certain key sectors. Questions were raised about the role and purpose of the group, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the chairing arrangements, the lack of co-ordination and forward planning of meetings and other housekeeping arrangements. Concerns were also raised about the limited connections with other policy areas both internally and externally. There was recognition from group members that the Working Group was in need of reinvigoration if it was to provide a valuable resource in community strategy policy and practice in the future.

5.10   One recent output from the Community Strategies Working Group has been the establishment of a network for community planning officers in Wales (Welsh Community Planning Officers Network). This is similar to a number of other policy-based networks that currently exist throughout Wales in relation to equality, sustainable development, health promotion, policy and many others. Both the Welsh Assembly and the Welsh Local Government Association are supporting the network in terms of staff and other limited resources. The general purposes of the network are to exchange and share information and interesting practice about community strategy matters, and to influence and advise the Assembly and others on aspects of community strategy policy. Currently the membership of the network is limited to local authority community planning officers, and the question of widening representation to other community planning interests in other organisations or policy areas at local and national levels will need to be addressed. There are obvious disadvantages with a narrow representation particularly within a policy arena that is by its very nature highly diverse and comprehensive.

> **Recommendation 1:**
> **Welsh Community Planning Officer's Network**
>
> The Welsh Community Planning Officer's Network should consider widening its membership to include practitioners from a range of policy areas and organisations other than local government.

5.11   The Welsh Local Government Association is an important national stakeholder in relation to community strategies. It contributes to the work of the Community Strategies Working Group but to date has produced little independent guidance on, or analysis of community strategy practice. However, a number of other national organisations in Wales have produced helpful guidance in relation to their particular interests and the development of local community strategies including the Welsh Language Board, Citizen's Advice Bureau, CADW, Environment Agency Wales and the WCVA/WLGA's report on joint working between local authorities and the voluntary sector.

Local Level

Staffing

5.12   The statutory duty to prepare community strategies lies singly on all local authorities, and the initiation, design and resourcing of the process has rested predominantly with them. The management of community strategies is, with very few exceptions, located at the centre of local authorities under the umbrella of the Chief Executive's Department, and more specifically within corporate policy units. The Heads of these units have line management responsibilities for this function. In some authorities, there are dedicated community planning officers or co-ordinators, but in others, policy officers undertake community strategy activities alongside other duties.

5.13   Up to this point in time, the focus has been on co-ordinating the preparation of the community strategy document, servicing the local strategic partnerships and associated structures, and undertaking the public consultation process. Apart from a relatively modest staff resource, small budgetary provision has existed in some authorities for one-off purposes such as public consultation exercises[2].

5.14   Our evidence leads us to conclude that, in general:

- Comparatively little staff resource has been dedicated to the management of community strategies.
- A number of officers undertake community strategy activities alongside other duties.
- The seniority of officers in many cases is junior, lacking relevant expertise and experience in complex strategic management exercises.

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[2] A survey undertaken by Welsh Assembly Government in March 2006 found that 9 Councils had no community planning budget for 2005/06; 3 Councils had a budget under £3,000; 3 Councils had a budget over £50,000; and 6 Councils did not reply to the survey.

Resourcing

5.15   The question of resources has surfaced frequently during the course of this evaluation. One view expressed by a senior local government director was: *"the community strategy should not come with a pot of money - it should be part of what we do anyway"*. Alternatively, many local authority representatives complained of having to bear the burden of servicing and resourcing the community strategy process. They argued that, although many of their local partners are prepared to contribute to local strategic partnership in kind, it was rare for them to contribute financially to the costs of resourcing the process or assist with other costs. However, there are a few instances where help has been forthcoming for printing or consultation costs.

5.16   The evidence suggests that:

- Financial resources available to community strategies are very small. In some cases, there has been a dedicated budget for one-off items of expenditure such as public consultation exercises. Budgets are £20k maximum (Source: Interviews with Community Strategy Officers). In many instances, the general coffers of corporate strategy unit budgets have to be used.
- Financial contributions from other partners on community strategy partnerships have been almost negligible with few exceptions.

5.17   The response from partners in general is that they are already hard pressed to meet their own responsibilities, and some quite frankly view it as a Council responsibility because of the statutory duty. The voluntary sector naturally claim that it is not in a position to contribute financially to the process and has its own capacity problems in keeping up with the demands of the process, and lastly, a number of statutory partners argue that they equally have capacity issues in being able to devote staff resources to more than one local strategic partnership in their divisional areas.

5.18   The predominant view locally is that Welsh Assembly Government should make available resources to community strategy partnerships to enable them to service the community strategy process, specifically for:

- Community strategy co-ordinators to oversee and facilitate the process, and
- Capacity building programmes at both individual and partnership levels.

5.19   Local authority representatives' point to the apparent inconsistency in the approach taken by the Welsh Assembly to other major strategic initiatives such as Community Safety Partnerships, Health, Social Care and Well Being Partnerships, and Children and Young Persons Partnerships. Here, central funding was made available for process co-ordination. Other stakeholders interviewed counter this argument by maintaining that, through a local governance approach to the planning and delivery of public services, considerable efficiencies could result from better co-ordination, reduced duplication and integrated services. The resultant benefits would outweigh the costs of the process.

> **Recommendation 2:**
> **Resources for Co-ordination (for local government and Community Strategy Partnerships)**
>
> We understand the arguments on both sides for resources to fund the costs of the co-ordination and servicing of community strategy processes. Our balanced view is that central government should not be expected to accompany every new initiative with extra resources. Community strategies are a legitimate responsibility of local government, the costs of which should be met via more effective and collaborative forms of working.

Guidance and Advice

5.20 The evaluation also explored the effectiveness of the relationship between the Welsh Assembly and local government more generally in relation to guidance, support and advice. On the issue of the appropriateness and usefulness of the statutory guidance, a number of views were expressed as follows:

- The lack of prescription is welcomed and the guidance contains a useful framework and guide to steer local partnerships in the right direction. There are expectations in the guidance, but the manner in which these are undertaken and delivered is rightly a matter for local determination.
- The guidance is insufficiently developed and there is not enough detail on how to undertake the various components of the strategy process, particularly in terms of implementation and evaluation. Frequent contrasts were made to the guidance that accompanies the preparation of the Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategies which is much more detailed and prescriptive than that for community strategies.
- Organisations such as the Welsh Language Board and the voluntary sector argue that the guidance needs to be more prescriptive and binding on how specific issues are addressed or how particular sectors are best engaged.

5.21 The prevailing view at a local level was that the Welsh Assembly in general and the Community Strategy Working Group in particular, were providing insufficient advice and support to inform the development and delivery of community strategies. Practitioners and managers in and around the community strategy process in particular, professed a need for 'best practice' material and 'what works' in other areas to assist them in their tasks. The Welsh Community Planning Officer's Network consider that "there is no need for added prescription in terms of statutory guidance", although it believes there is a requirement for more information about issues relating to the design and delivery of community strategies.

5.22 The Assembly is required to review the appropriateness of the statutory guidance which is now some 5 years old. During that period, the policy landscape has changed, for instance with the Wales Spatial Plan and the Making Connections agenda. Also, the early experiences of the community planning process have tested the relevance and practicality of the guidance. Clearly, there is a case for updating the original guidance document. The key issue is the balance that is struck between setting an overall framework or template as opposed to imposing greater prescription. Increased prescription may be seen as an option to improve

the quality of the poorest community strategies and/or be considered as the minimum standards or expectations of central government. The areas covered by any revised guidance might include techniques and methodologies for involving citizens and communities; models of community strategy partnerships; approaches to strategic management; and outcome-focused performance management frameworks.

> ## Recommendation 3:
> ## Revised Guidance (for Welsh Assembly Government)
>
> In a similar vein, the merits of revising the statutory guidance are open to some debate. We are not convinced that this is the most effective strategy for improving the quality of community strategies. No amount of central prescription will substitute for informed and talented local proponents of community strategy practice and management. However, whilst we do not recommend the creation of more prescriptive guidance, we do recommend the provision of more information providing examples and case studies of the community strategy process in action.

5.23   However, the research team's view is that statutory guidance on its own is not a particularly effective tool for learning. It needs to be accompanied by a host of other learning strategies - networks, training and development programmes, action learning sets, workshops, web sites, research reports - that are designed to raise the capacity to undertake the difficult task of preparing and delivering community strategies. The experience of English community strategies and the evaluation of LSPs reported in Chapter 4 are instructive here.

> ## Recommendation 4:
> ## Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer (for Welsh Assembly Government and local government)
>
> We believe that considerable investment is necessary in capacity building, network development, skills training and knowledge transfer around key elements of community strategies such as working in partnership, methods of citizen involvement and integrated policy making. This is best achieved in partnership between different levels of government and different sectors, and could attract specific funding from Welsh Assembly Government in the short term.

Duty to Co-operate

5.24   The Welsh Community Planning Officer's Network argue that the community planning process would be more effective if there was a statutory duty on all relevant public bodies to co-operate with the local authority. This position is premised on the experiences of these officers so far and their observation that public bodies such as NHS Trusts, LHBs, the WDA, ELWa, WTB, the Police and others are not fully committed to the process and their engagement in Community Strategy Partnerships is largely tokenistic. The solution

to this problem is seen to lie in a measure of statutory compulsion in the form of a duty of partnership or co-operation. It is argued that this signals the importance of community strategies "at a time when the value and validity of the process is yet to be widely accepted". There are, for instance, joint duties between local authorities and local health boards to prepare Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategies, and with the police in relation to Community Safety Strategies.

5.25   Setting aside the problem of interpretation of highly contested notions such as 'partnership' and 'co-operation', the research team's view is that attempting to coerce actors into forms of co-operative action is not the most effective strategy. There is no compelling evidence from other countries or from partnership working in other policy areas that concludes that statutory duties of co-operation lead to more effective outcomes. Unwilling actors have the ability to subvert, dilute and undermine attempts to direct their behaviours. The route to collaborative working must lie in the ability of the local authority, through its community leadership role, to build the case for working together through client-centred models of public services, to develop a collaborative culture, to align organisational self-interests, to build robust trusting relationships, to promote appropriate forms of leadership and management, and to clearly evidence the benefits of a commitment to co-operative ways of working. This requires time and effort over a sustained period of time, political and executive leadership at different levels of governance and a capacity building project that is designed to create inter-organisational competence. Effective and sustainable partnership working is unlikely to result from resorting to force actors to work together by statutory mandate. On the contrary, it needs to develop through a shared understanding of the benefits of this form of working and be crafted by public service managers and leaders with the experience and expertise to operate in these collaborative arenas. It should be noted that the case for a duty of co-operation was not one that was highlighted by stakeholders other than the local authority community planning officers.

> **Recommendation 5:**
> **Statutory Duties (for Welsh Assembly Government)**
>
> Although there is a clear case for a greater commitment and involvement of different partners in the community strategy process, our view is that this is not necessarily achieved through an extension of statutory duties. The notion of community strategies lies squarely in the realms of a local authority community leadership role, and effective partnership working is more likely to be achieved by organisations motivated to participate through a recognition of collective interests and a commitment to citizen-centred services.

Progress and Style

5.26   With a single exception, all 22 authorities in Wales submitted their community strategies to the Welsh Assembly by May 2004. Their status varies between different forms of approval, and most but not all, are glossy, bilingual documents which are predominantly designed for a general public audience. Hence, the community strategies or plans tend to be short and concise with

illustrations breaking up text and description. In some cases, the strategies are accompanied by separate actions plans either for the area as a whole or for defined parts of it[3].

5.27 Whilst there is considerable variation between the strategies, in terms of content there is much similarity in terms of basic background material, reference to the partnership arrangements and structures, details of the strategy process including future proposals for monitoring and review, together with the results of public engagement exercises and contact opportunities.

5.28 The structure of the strategies largely reflects the guidance issued by the Welsh Assembly. There are vision statements, goals and objectives usually corralled under 5 or 6 general policy themes, and reference to values, principles and cross cutting issues. The strategy documents highlight the multi-agency approach that has been adopted to their preparation and list the supporting organisations. The logos of key partner organisations are sometimes included. Reference is invariably made to the over-arching nature of the community strategies and to their relationship to a long list of other strategies and partnerships. The Action Plans contain a wealth of detail on specific actions, activities and programmes often associated with targets, performance indicators and responsible delivery agents.

5.29 In summary, the three main outputs of the community strategy process to date are firstly, the production of a community strategy or plan, and in many instances, an associated action plan, secondly, the completion of a public consultation programme, and thirdly, the establishment of a local strategic partnership.

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[3] A survey by Welsh Assembly Government in March 2006 found that 8 Community Strategy Partnerships had an Action Plan; 3 were in the process of preparing one; 5 did not have an Action Plan; and 6 did not reply to the survey.

Chapter 6   Models of Change

Introduction

6.1   This chapter represents the bulk of the evaluation and centres on the effectiveness with which the preparation, delivery and evaluation of community strategies have been approached in Wales. It explores in some detail the approaches that have been developed to achieve a number of different community strategy purposes, and the robustness and appropriateness of the local strategic partnerships that have been set up to direct and manage the process of preparing the community plans.

6.2   In the absence generally of any significant implementation or evaluation experience, this section reflects on the likely effectiveness of the mechanisms, machinery and frameworks that are being developed to convert the strategies into measurable actions and interventions on the ground. The chapter is organised around six main models of change that we consider underpins the development of community strategies and these are as follows:

- The Rational Planning Model which aims to achieve a better co-ordination and integration of services and plans between organisations and sectors.
- The Civic Renewal Model which focuses on the role of community strategies in enhancing local democracy and engaging with local people and communities.
- The Network Governance Model which promotes a partnership approach to the management of local governance.
- The Multi-Level Governance Model that extends the concept of partnership working to different tiers of governance.
- The Learning Model which views community strategies as mainly opportunities for sharing good practice and learning between managers and organisations.
- The Public Relations Model which sees community strategies as little other than cosmetic exercises.

6.3   The chapter concludes with a discussion of a number of implementation issues which arose during the course of the evaluation.

Community Strategies as Multi-Purpose Vehicles

6.4   The notion of a community strategy is both broad and contestable in terms of purpose and focus. The statutory duty of being a policy instrument or vehicle to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of an area together with making a contribution to sustainable development in the UK is wide enough to encompass a range of potentially different aspirations and purposes. The evidence to emerge from this research is that there are indeed a number of different purposes or models underpinning the thinking and development of community strategies throughout Wales. These models encapsulate a rationale for how and why a particular approach to the preparation of community strategy will bring about change. These are the 'theories of change' that form the basis of this evaluation study, and against which the overall effectiveness of community strategies in Wales can be assessed.

6.5   The process of generating the models of change began with a review of the available literature on the development of community strategies and local strategic partnerships. An early contribution from the national LSP evaluation team in England provided a basis for thinking about potential models of change. They identified a range of potential 'models' of LSPs, each underpinned by a specific purpose (Warwick et al 2002:16):

- A social relations model. The purpose of LSPs is to create better social relations (understanding, trust etc), economic relations become embedded in social networks; social capital is built, business gets done better/quicker.
- An economic efficiency model. The purpose is to use the LSPs to generate more efficient use of resource; co-ordination of programmes, targeting of these programme onto key objectives.
- A political governance model. The purpose of LSPs is to act as the forum for the exercise of new structures and processes of local governance, where new power relationships are played out.
- An organisational model in which there is little politics and interorganisational procedures become ends in themselves rather than means.
- A learning model in which the dominant culture is one of listening, sharing, building on experience to increase the capacity of partners to collaborate.
- A theatrical model in which partners go through the motions of partnership to fulfil external requirements but where underlying tensions are not addressed and partnership relationships remain superficial.

6.6   These 'models' were considered alongside available literature from Wales on community strategies, e.g. WAG guidance, policy contributions from the WLGA and a range of possible 'Welsh models' was developed. These provided the basis for the research instruments that were used in the community strategies evaluation. Specifically, the rapid appraisal of each community strategy document included questions about underlying purpose, while the interview schedules that guided interviews with national stakeholders and key informants in the case studies, also contained structured opportunities for the interviewer to probe interviewees about their perceptions of this fundamental question of purpose. In some instances, there was clarity in perceived purpose or purposes, in others it was a matter of helping to surface implicit assumptions. Figure 5 captures a range of images of community strategies collected from interviews with local and national stakeholders.

6.7   As a consequence of this iterative process, working back and forth from different evidence sources, we refined our range of potential 'models of change' that underpinned community strategies in Wales, identifying 6 broad purposes. However, although they are presented and explored independently, they are clearly not mutually exclusive and elements of each, or all of them, may exist in one community strategy at the same time. In our view, this in itself is not problematic as there can be significant areas of compatibility. However, the complexity of the overall process tends to increase with additional purposes.

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Figure 5:   Images of the Purpose of a Community Strategy

- "At its best, the community strategy will mean all efforts are directed the same way and reflect the hopes and aspirations of the community"
- "Overarching strategy that links related strategies together"
- "Vehicle to bring different organisations together - a co-ordination function"
- "a strategic context for delivery"
- "joined up thinking and planning"
- "mechanism for integration"
- "should be the overarching plan to serve the community"
- "a process that has a trickle down effect that joined up working between different partners and it isn't kept at a strategic level"
- "to give organisations agreed direction and priorities to enable them to work in a structured way together"
- "a means of forging a common agenda"
- "a vehicle to work in partnership"
- "a key overarching document that influences what goes on in others, that all partners sign up to and that has widespread community support
- "it needs to look at delivering things more effectively and to do it in a co-ordinated way"
- "it is the strategy of strategies"
- "to engage and work in partnership across different sectors to develop a plan for the community"

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6.8   Our research also shows that different interest groups or organisations place a different emphasis on different purposes. For instance, voluntary sector interests place a high premium on promoting a more effective engagement of people in decision making processes, whereas the statutory sector in general perceive the benefits to rest in a better co-ordination and integration of plans and strategies.

6.9   Finally, the situation is highly dynamic and the main purpose can vary over time as a result of shared learning, local circumstances, national imperatives, changing social and economic circumstances, and different stages in the policy process. For instance, in a number of the community strategies examined, the initial focus has quite evidently been focused on building partnership capacity and seeking to consult with people and communities. This is now changing with the imperative moving to delivery.

6.10   However, the implementation challenges of each model vary significantly in terms of design, organisational structure, process and methods of evaluation, and this has caused many partnerships to seek to revisit their 'raison d'etre' and sharpen and clarify their role and purpose. The main models apparent in the approaches to community strategies are illustrated in Figure 6 and are now discussed in turn.
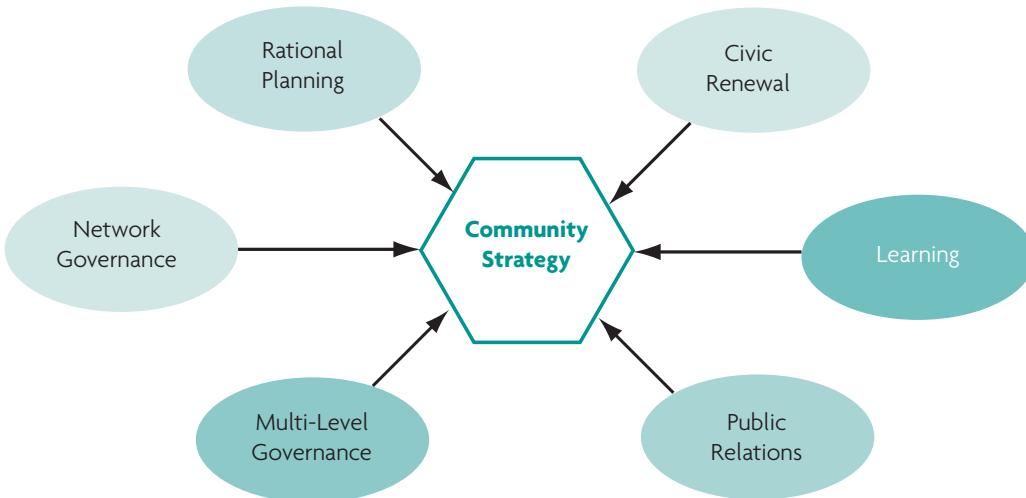
Figure 6: Community Strategies as Multi-Purpose Vehicles

Model 1   Rational Planning: Co-ordination and Integration

6.11   This model clearly views the main purpose of a community strategy as a vehicle to promote the most efficient and effective use of resources in a local area. It is based on the assertion that there is evidence of duplication and overlap between services and organisations, together with gaps in service provision and unmet need. The model argues that better co-ordination and/or integration both vertically and particularly horizontally can deliver more efficient outcomes. This model lies squarely in the tradition of 'joined-up' policy or holistic government, and invites plan and partnership rationalisation. However, the broad policy imperative to promote 'joined-up' government conceals a number of

important distinctions inherent in this notion and highlighted by Pollitt (2003) including:

- Joined-up policymaking and joined-up implementation.
- Variations in the intensity of joining-up ranging from the broad over-arching themes that aim to provide a coherent framework for a range of policies and programmes, and objectives that attempt to bind together programmes. through progressively tighter systems driven by joint budgets and protocols
- Horizontal as opposed to vertical linkages.
- Differences in the target of joined-up government - social group, geographical area or policy sector.

6.12 In the current study, a dominant view of the main purpose of a community is as the primary mechanism for delivering a coherent, rational and co-ordinated approach to the planning and delivery of public services. It is the overarching strategy that both shapes and is informed by a panoply of other policy-based strategies, plans and partnerships in a local area. It offers a shared vision and a framework for guiding the strategic prioritisation of resources across the full range of policy areas and public, private and voluntary organisations. The ultimate goal of this approach is to view a community strategy as a mechanism or framework for allocating the totality of resources available to a particular geographical area (irrespective of source) between shared and negotiated community priorities and needs both on a short term and longer term basis.

6.13 On the basis of our evidence, this model is an integral part of all the community strategies in Wales. However, it is currently undertaken with mixed effectiveness. Figure 7 captures the main components of this model as currently practiced, and these are now examined under the following headings: evidenced-based approach, clear vision, strategic goals and objectives, vertical integration horizontal integration, cross cutting issues and outcome-focused approach.

Figure 7: Stages in the Rational Planning Model
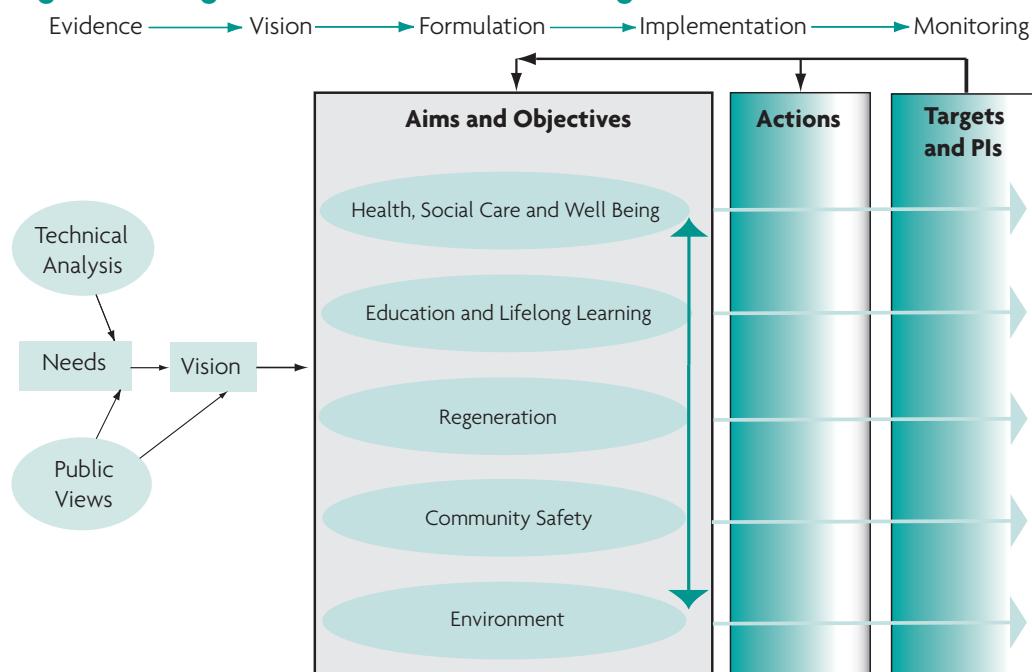
Evidence-Based Approach

6.14   In contrast with the guidance for Health, Social Care and Well Being strategies which require a formal needs assessment, there is no such prescription for community strategies. Hence, approaches to this task differ considerably and evidence of need, the weight and value placed on so-called objective versus publicly generated evidence and the transparency with which it is used to shape the formulation of the strategy, is variable in both content and quality.

6.15   A number of strategy documents do include a summary of key statistical facts about their local areas and in some cases such as Caerphilly, a number of pages are dedicated to an explanation of trends and issues in the local environment, economy and society. The argument for the non-inclusion of this information by some authorities is that it would be enormously unwieldy and indigestible for public consumption, and that it exists within the themed based strategies such as the Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy Needs Assessment, and the Crime and Community Safety Audit. In many strategies, rather more prominence is given to the results of the public consultation exercises and the views of citizens, communities and interest groups, than to other forms of needs assessment.

6.16   In terms of interesting practice, the Isle of Anglesey was able to combine the management of the needs assessment and public consultation process for both the community strategy and the Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy. However, in order to comply with Welsh Assembly requirements, two separate strategy documents had to be provided along the lines prescribed by the legislation for each.

6.17   In view of the considerable overlap between the two strategies, it appears to the research team that every effort should be made to support this kind of local initiative that is designed to integrate rather than separate highly interdependent strategies.

Visions, Goals and Objectives

6.18   The need for a clear vision to catalyse both the community and its public and private agents towards a desired future state prefaced all the community strategies. They were framed as ideal conditions to aim for over a period of typically a 10-15 years timescale. However, evidence from numerous interviews at both national and local levels suggested that the nature and form of many visions raised a number of fundamental issues. Typical views on visions included the following: *"Very high level and woolly"; "Tries to be all things to all people"; "No problem in signing up to the strategy because it says nice things"; "The community strategy is everything and nothing"; "I think the breadth of it is probably one of the issues - it's trying to be all things to all people and cover all areas"* and, finally, *"We don't want to let anyone down, so we put everything into it".*

6.19   In our view, the criteria for judging effective vision statements are threefold: they should be unique and distinctive to a community, area or organisation; they should be realistic, achievable and capable of being operationalised for service delivery purposes; and they should attract a sense of ownership through

their joint production - the process is as important as the words. Applying these conditions to the visions we examined, and in the light of the comments we gathered, a number of systemic problems can be identified. Firstly, it is difficult to see how many of the visions could not apply equally to any community strategy area in Wales; they are not peculiar to individual areas.

6.20 Secondly, in the main, many were rather bland and pitched at a high level of abstraction. They were described by many interviewees as 'motherhood and apple-pie' statements and simple expressions of how citizens would like their quality of life to be. A number of public agencies considered that the visions contained nothing that they could not agree with and as a consequence were content to be associated with, and endorse the subsequent strategy.

6.21   Thirdly, concerns were raised that most visions failed to articulate a spatial element and conveyed little as to how a future distribution of scarce resources would be allocated between different places. It is in this area that the new Local Development Plans are likely to offer more clarity, although there is no reason why community strategies strategy visions should avoid this particular element. What is important is that there should not be too many visions or a lack of coherence between the visions of different strategic documents in any given area. The current lack of synchronisation between the preparation of community strategies and local development plans is a problem that needs to be addressed to ensure coherence between the two frameworks.

6.22   Faced with the accusation of blandness, the counter argument was that the negotiation of more challenging or sharper visions entailed resolving potential disagreement amongst different interests and stakeholders in an area and local strategic partnership. On a more positive note, the process of developing the vision statement, particularly in the context of public consultation exercises, was considered by some respondents to be well worthwhile.

> **Recommendation 8:**
> **Visions (for Community Strategy Partnerships)**
>
> Community strategy visions need to be unique, realistic and capable of being operationalised. They also need to reflect the agreed priorities of central and local government, but this is a difficult balance to achieve.

6.23   As indicated above, the main problem of a broad, undifferentiated vision statement is its inability to meaningfully shape future strategic prioritisation. This vacuum is leading Denbighshire County Council to re-visit this area of strategy preparation. It considers that despite the widespread engagement of the community and other stakeholders in the process of preparing its community strategy, it is deficient in providing clarity about purpose and priorities. Hence, a re-visioning process has been commissioned to fill this policy gap. The decision to undertake the re-visioning process corresponds with a change of political administration in Denbighshire. This raises the interesting question of the extent to which community strategies can withstand the vagaries of changes to the political control of councils, and the effect that this has on local partnerships and strategic direction. One might speculate that different political parties could in future fight local elections on manifestos based on different community strategies,

which certainly might raise the profile of them and possibly contribute to an enhancement of local democratic processes. However, the potential for constant changes might be destabilising in the face of longer term actions, and undermine local partnership relationships. One problem of successive visioning processes as in the case of Denbighshire is that local communities might prefer action rather than further process. However, in general, many community strategy partnerships face the problem of converting high level intentions into a framework of strategic prioritisation, and this process will test the robustness and collaborative intentions of each of their partners. It is a stage that partnerships go through as part of a general process of partnership building over time.

6.24   Vision statements are followed by a wide range of methodologies intended to provide strategic direction through the medium of goals, aims and objectives. These tend to be aggregated around key policy areas, with additional ones framed as cross cutting issues such as sustainable development and equality.

6.25   There is a tendency in some strategies for overly long lists of aims and objectives which give the impression of being 'wish lists'. The biggest problem is that the frameworks of goals and objectives do not provide a mechanism for prioritisation of resource allocation between competing claims and needs. In the view of one director, *"there is a need to prioritise the priorities"*.

6.26   Consequently, it is unclear how the business planning of individual organisations can be influenced by highly aspirational and unprioritised collaborative strategic planning frameworks. This point is captured by one senior manager who said: *"I find it difficult to understand how my organisation can contribute to the overall aims and objectives of the plan. There is nothing in there that would prevent us from what we're doing now and nothing in there to encourage us to do anything differently either".*

> **Recommendation 9:**
> **Strategic Priorities (for Community Strategy Partnerships)**
>
> Community strategies need to provide a framework for strategic prioritisation to help re-shape or re-configure the resource allocation priorities of key public agencies towards a new consensus.

Vertical Integration

6.27   The effectiveness of the rational model is dependent on mechanisms to manage both vertical and horizontal integration. The majority of community strategies have organised their thinking around 5 or 6 themed based policy areas, typically jobs and economic regeneration, crime and community safety, health, social care and well being, education and lifelong learning and the environment. The attraction of this model is that these areas are associated with existing statutory partnerships. The exception is the environment, and in many areas informal partnerships have been created, sometimes supported by officers from the Environment Agency Wales. One of the difficulties articulated by local community strategy managers is that the partnerships are all very different in terms of statutory basis, stage of development, culture and ways of working.

6.28 The process of vertical integration is seen to lie in a two-way process up and down a pyramid which has the community strategy at the apex, themed strategies at the next level, service delivery plans below that, and finally down to individual plans at the very bottom. Implementation involves attempting to align the business plans of both the Council and each of its partners against strategic objectives for each policy area. This has often involved the mapping of existing partnerships, strategies and plans, and in the first iteration of the community strategies, the tendency has been to accept the existing objectives, programmes and planned activities of agencies who contribute to a particular policy area as the basis for each component of the overall strategy.

6.29 The criticism that this approach attracts is that the overarching community strategy merely acts as a repository for existing behaviour and in no real sense contributes to shaping the way organisations conduct their business. It is a process of alignment not re-alignment against a set of community strategy priorities. One community safety co-ordinator reported that: *"they've just lifted the community safety bit from our strategy into the community strategy, and so we are only doing what we are doing already"*, and another local government interviewee reflected that: *"it is just a mapping exercise, not a framework for prioritisation".* Other contributions suggested that there was little value in community strategies simply acting as *"just compendiums of existing strategies"* or a *"re-statement and re-packaging of existing plans and priorities"*. Many of the action plans were considered as *"things that are going on already"* and in the words of one manager *"an aggregation of stuff with more targets than Robin Hood"*. In many cases, they consisted of a selection or sometimes *"a hotchpotch of things from large to small"* and the criteria for inclusion or exclusion was unclear.

6.30 This mapping exercise adds little value unless it is used as a precursor for a re-alignment of activities based on community strategy priorities. However, existing community strategies in the main do not provide either an effective structure or process for strategic prioritisation. The strategy documents do not set strategic priorities and are not outcome-focused and the community strategy partnerships often lack the legitimacy and power to effect radical change.

6.31 The question of whether the themed partnerships would cede their control to a higher authority, or whether public agencies were seriously inclined to be influenced by community strategies were keen issues for debate. One senior manager *"suspected that many organisations feel that their contributions are limited to only a few areas and that even if they felt they should do more, their organisations budget limitations and corporate priorities prevent them from engaging as effectively as they could"*. However well intentioned, whether a synchronisation of planning cycles between local public agencies such as attempted in Cardiff and Gwynedd, or an integration between community strategies and business and corporate plans make any real difference, is yet to be proven to any significant degree.

Figure 8: Co-operation, Co-ordination and Collaboration

Co-operation	Co-ordination	Collaboration
Sharing information about existing and proposed strategies and plans; mapping connections; networking between individuals and organisations; joint protocols	Identifying areas of overlap between plans and strategies of different organisations; co-ordinating services and actions; undertaking joint planning	Integrating plans and strategies between organisations joint commissioning of services; pooling budgets; devising collective accountability and performance management frameworks

6.32   In defence of this approach, the argument put forward was that because the majority of existing partnerships were in existence before the community strategy, it was only possible to reflect existing activity. The task in the future would be to endeavour to move from this position of co-operation to conditions of co-ordination and collaboration as suggested in the model illustrated in Figure 8. It was also pointed out that in some authorities there was evidence or outcrops of co-ordination and integration between services, but these could not be attributed to the community strategy process.

6.33   One way the local authority's business could be aligned with the community strategy was through their improvement or corporate plans. Denbighshire, Caerphilly and Cardiff for instance were making efforts to secure coherence and alignment between the two frameworks. In Rhondda Cynon Taff, the community strategy is used to inform the corporate plan, improvement plan and individual business plans for each service. The corporate plan uses the community strategy themes rather than traditional departmental approaches, and the business plans are linked with community strategy objectives. Similar efforts are being made in Powys, Conwy and Bridgend (Source: Welsh Community Planning Officers Network).

6.34   Although many local strategic partnerships have examined and mapped the connections between different strategies, partnerships and plans, the process does not appear to have resulted in plan rationalisation or reduction of any significance. The structural architecture remains substantially intact and local views suggested that there would be little change until the Welsh Assembly concluded their review on plan rationalisation. However, the community planning process in Cardiff has led to a dissolution of some partnerships as a result of the partnership mapping exercise, and the creation of a new one for the environment as a response to a perceived gap in provision.

Recommendation 10:
Co-ordination or Integration (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Although a number of examples of integrated service planning and delivery were noted during the course of this evaluation (albeit not part of the community planning process), it is perhaps an unrealistic aspiration to expect that community strategies can be the catalyst for this form of working across a wide swath of public services. Integrated services with perhaps pooled budgets and joint performance accountability frameworks are notoriously difficult to broker. In the near future, community strategies should realistically strive for better co-ordination of services and an identification of gaps in services rather than integration.

6.35 This model of alignment/re-configuration discussed above is highly complex. Many functionally differentiated organisations such as the local council or local health boards admit that this challenge is daunting within their own organisations let alone across a number of organisations operating within a particular area. It is essentially a top-down approach to mainstreaming with all it attendant problems. It is also one that is not immediately publicly or politically visible and one that is difficult to isolate benefits and attribute added value.

Figure 9:   Exemplars

Caerphilly

- 13 Beacon Projects chosen on the basis of the top priorities of the community strategy; that will benefit from a partnership approach; that will contribute to a number of the 28 objectives in the strategy simultaneously; and are consistent with the spatial strategy.
- Projects include public and community transport; town and village centre improvements; local procurement; healthy living/hospital and community services project; education for sustainable development and neighbourhood wardens and rangers.
- Phased over a number of years with some pump priming resources.
- Co-ordinated through relevant themed partnerships.

Rhondda Cynon Taff

- Working group established around the problem of economically inactive in the area, aims to produce an action plan involving a co-ordinated approach between key local agencies.
- Main stakeholders are Job Centre Plus, WDA, ELWa, the Council, Bro Dysg and the LHB.
- Prime example of an issue that requires horizontal integration between agencies.
- Used to demonstrate the potential of action under the umbrella of the community strategy.

Gwynedd

- Involves a mechanism referred to as 'priority projects'.
- These are a small number of projects that cross over a number of different policy areas and require integrated planning and action.
- Can be used to demonstrate the added value of community strategies.

6.36   In response to this, a number of local strategic partnerships have pursued a bottom-up alternative (or addition) involving the selection of exemplars - projects or activities that can be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of particular approaches. Successful projects can demonstrate good practice and subsequently be duplicated or modified as a result of learning in order to build new policy in a given area. This is in line with thinking from Edwards and Hume (1992) and Rondinelli (1993) on how development projects can be 'scaled up' or used as 'policy experiments'. The use of exemplars have the benefit of demonstrating where community strategies are adding value, as well as a mechanism for promoting cross cutting working (Figure 9).

6.37   Powys refer to 'bridging priorities', Caerphilly use 'beacon projects', and Rhondda Cynon Taff has a special inter-agency group assembled around the theme of 'economically inactive' people. They are seen as priorities for action that cut across different policy areas and require a multi-agency approach. They are also based on community perceptions of need, and the aspiration is that where a particular approach is found to be successful, it would be mainstreamed elsewhere in the local area. However, the general policy experience of effecting whole-system change or learning from small scale interventions is difficult as policy agendas and resource priorities change, frequently drawing attention elsewhere before mainstream change has time to become embedded.

Recommendation 11:
Using Exemplars (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

The movement in many community strategy partnerships towards the identification of a small number of action projects to act as exemplars of good practice is understandable given, firstly the difficulty of achieving whole-systems change, and secondly the desire to be associated with clearly attributable results from community strategy interventions. It represents a legitimate bottom up approach to policy change. However, in themselves, they are likely only to contribute on the margins unless the lessons from them are mainstreamed into organisational budgets and priorities. For this to happen, the lessons from other policy initiatives suggest that the mechanisms to effect mainstreaming need to be considered at the outset.

Horizontal Integration

6.38   The area where community strategies can potentially add considerable value is through more effective integration across policy areas, partnerships and organisations. However, despite considerable commitment from all parties

to securing this integration, research evidence suggests that progress to date is limited. A number of examples from different policy areas illustrate this general problem.

(i)   Communities First (Source: Community Regeneration Network)

6.39   The general view of local authority community regeneration officers was that there was little or no integration between local Communities First and Community Strategy processes. Typical opinions on this issue included: *"I see no relationship between community strategies and communities first local action plans"; "community strategies say all the right things but they are too broad brush, and I can't see how we feed local action plans into them"; "in my area, there are poor linkages between the both"; "there is no sense of a wider strategic context in the communities first partnerships"*. Critically, community regeneration officers were very clear that *"communities first partnerships are more important than community strategy partnerships because there is money involved"*. The prospect of accessing resources to enable action on the ground was an important motivation for this group of practitioners, and the value of participating within community strategy processes was much less clear.

6.40   There was an understanding, at a policy level, that community strategies were the overarching strategies within which communities first strategies should 'nest'. However, working through the implications of this in practical terms, and balancing top down and bottom up perspectives was seen to represent areas of future challenge. However, Caerphilly has gone some way to integrate the two frameworks within an overall strategic approach for its area (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Links to Communities First (Source: Welsh Community Planning Officer's Network)

The processes have been linked by including community partnership representatives on the two main executive bodies for the community strategy as well as on local area fora. The Council, LHB and other agencies use the Communities First partnerships to consult local residents and also the community planning process enables key agencies to implement Local Action Plans.

(ii)   Local Development Plan (Source: Society of Planning Officers in Wales)

6.41   Development planning interests painted a largely negative picture of the relationship between community strategies and local development plans. In general, they considered that there was a poor linkage between local development processes and community strategies with planning officers rarely getting involved in community planning. Also, development issues were not well represented in community strategies, and they did not provide an evidence base for local development plans. Other comments included: *"in my area, the community strategy did not inform the UDP and there were no linkages; the community plan has a low profile and is not driving anything"; Community strategies across Wales are all "motherhood and apple-pie"; "any community strategy could be interchangeable between each authority"; "there is no implementation, no evaluation and no outcome-focus"; "there is no way the*

community strategy can direct resources from one area to another", and finally, "the expertise in policy units who prepare the community strategies is inadequate and poorly resourced".

6.42   This is a disappointing picture because the case for treating the two frameworks as highly interdependent is compelling. Local development plans can provide a spatial articulation of, and form for community strategies. They can contribute to the realisation of community visions, and in turn be better informed themselves by a coherent analysis of social, economic and environmental determinants. However, development plan interests suggest that current community strategy visions do not provide a sufficiently clear and realistic framework to assist in the design of local development plan options and futures. In addition, the new system of local development plans requires evidence of citizen engagement based on consensus building and stakeholder involvement methodologies. It makes little sense to organise separate public engagement exercises, so the issue of integration between the two processes becomes very real. There is the problem of timing of the two systems, and the question of whether the quality and type of public involvement for the community strategies is useable for development plan purposes.

(iii)   Crime and Community Safety (Source: Welsh Association of Crime and Community Safety Officers)

6.43   The focus group organised for crime and community safety co-ordinators in Wales surfaced a number of issues that resonated with evidence collected from other sources in this research study. These were that:

- *"community strategies are just bland statements", "they are too woolly and there is a general lack of understanding about their purpose".*
- There is a major problem relating to converting strategic intent into effective implementation. This was summarised by one officer as: "implementation is problematical, the glossy brochure looks nice but there are no targets and there are fatuous statements which are no use".
- The question of ownership was highlighted. The view of the group was that, unlike health or community safety which attracted a clear and coherent policy community and set of interests, the community strategy in comparison was likely to be far more diverse and ephemeral which had the effect of dissipating commitment and focus.
- The point was made that, in the first drafts of the community strategies, community safety strategies were predominantly inserted intact into the community strategies. Therefore, the process did not require any negotiation or threat to the status quo.
- Lastly, the group considered that to date, the community strategies were ineffective in linking the main policy strategies together. The existing links were primarily vertical.

(iv)   Health, Social Care and Well Being (Source: Health, Social Care and Well Being Facilitator's Network)

6.44   The discussion with this facilitator's network raised the general question of the need for two overarching strategies covering a local area. The argument being that, particularly if the well being element of the HSCWB strategy is interpreted to include all the determinants of a population's health status such as housing,

poverty, environmental quality, education, transport, crime and employment, the potential overlap with the community strategy is considerable. However, the two strategies are currently the subject of separate pieces of legislation, are administered by different divisions of Welsh Assembly Government, are the subject of separate statutory guidance, and have resulted in separate local processes and partnerships.

6.45 In practice, with few exceptions and particularly bearing in mind the different timescales of the two strategies, they were prepared independently of one other. As with other major policy strategies, the practice has been to slot HSCWB strategies largely intact into the community strategies. The focus of HSCWB strategies to date has been on health and social care matters rather than well being perspectives. Making the connections between the community strategy and HSCWB strategies particularly around well being issues remains a central challenge. The facilitator's network suggested that Welsh Assembly Government needed to be more prescriptive in this area to set out more clearly the relationship between the two processes, but also recognised that, in the words of one contributor: *"it's a lot down to individuals to make the connections between the two strategies"*. In this area, HSCWB co-ordinators were seen to have a pivotal role to play.

6.46 The contribution of assembling policy-orientated partnership co-ordinators to the promotion of horizontal integration was an emerging feature of practice in a number of areas such as Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly, Gwynedd, Bridgend and Wrexham. The general aim of these groups is to share knowledge and understanding of different partnerships, to raise awareness of current and emerging agendas, to communicate and disseminate information about the work of different partnerships, to work together on matters of training and organisational development, to identify fertile areas for collaboration and conversely to avoid potential conflicts and incompatibilities between different policies. Such groups are the champions of the cross cutting agendas who attempt to influence strategies, policies and approaches in different areas. They have the potential to promote good practice in different policy arenas, to encourage a more effective use of resources and generally to promote co-ordination and integration across policy areas and partnerships. However, the processes are not without difficulty and balancing the tensions between the desire for collaboration with competition for resources and status is a constant dilemma.

> ### Recommendation 12:
> ### Horizontal Integration (for Community Strategy Partnerships)
>
> It is in this area that community strategies can really stamp their mark, and techniques such as policy integration tools, meetings of co-ordinators, common membership on partnerships should be given attention.

Cross Cutting Themes

6.47 Most community strategies consider that there are a number of fundamental issues or problems that need to be embraced by all policy areas and partnerships. These are generally referred to as cross cutting issues and are

variously framed in terms of target groups (such as older persons and children and young people), values and principles of working, and themes such as equality, social exclusion, the Welsh language and sustainability. Although considerable prominence is given to these in the community strategy documents, far less information is available on how these are intended to be managed during the implementation processes, or how success is to be measured.

6.48 Undoubtedly, the effective management of cross cutting themes is very difficult, but it is a very important element of community strategy practice. The trend towards the steady proliferation of cross cutting issues increases the complexity of their management, and it is evident that there is competition for resources and status between them often as a result of changing political priorities. The legislation relating to the duty to prepare community strategies makes explicit reference to the need for them "to contribute to sustainable development in the UK". However, the evidence of this research suggests that this is a highly problematic area for most community strategy partnerships with few areas of notable practice. There are a number of reasons for this which stem in part from the conceptual confusion and diversity that characterise the very notion of sustainable development. This concept attracts meanings that range from sustainable development as a discrete environmental policy area to sustainable development as a set of principles or overarching policy paradigm. A recent report on the subject concludes that the difficulty in understanding the concept has prevented its progress in many areas and organisations. Clearly, unless there is clarity and consensus around definitions and understandings, it is unlikely that approaches to its management will be effective, and interpretations of effectiveness will be contested. However, it is unlikely that a single definition can be imposed and that flexibility must be allowed to take account of the multiple meanings found in different organisations and settings. What is important is the need to secure sufficient consensus to facilitate collective action and the operationalisation of the concept in widely disparate areas.

6.49 In the context of the community strategies in Wales, sustainable development is confusingly framed both as a cross cutting issue and a policy area concerned with traditional environmental concerns such as waste management, energy efficiency and biodiversity. In its latter interpretation, it is often considered to be the primary concern of the Environment Partnership which often has the effect of reinforcing the overly environmental aspects of the sustainable development and making it difficult to mainstream across diverse social, economic and environmental policy areas. Sustainable development interests generally struggle to attract a high profile within Welsh local government, there are major problems of communication, awareness and training and, there is little evidence of how sustainable development principles will be used to shape the design and implementation of many community strategies.

6.50 The Audit Commission report on sustainable development in Cardiff found that there was not a clear statement of how the principles of sustainable development would be delivered in an integrated way within the community strategy, and there was a need for consistent high level leadership at both political and executive levels to ensure a mainstreaming throughout Council services. Interestingly, the report posed the question as to whether energy was

best spent on continuing with a separate sustainability strategy, or whether effort should be reallocated to ensure that the community strategy and its implementation is sustainable in practice.

6.51   The involvement of the sustainable development consultants, Forum for the Future, was an important catalyst in the areas where sustainable development perspectives attracted greater priority such as the Isle of Anglesey, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire and Flintshire. The generic policy integration tool, first developed for Welsh Assembly Government as a management tool for mainstreaming sustainable development principles at a national level, was being tailored, promoted and piloted to assist the development of local community strategies. The tools can be used as an aid to policy development, a method of evaluation as in the case of Caerphilly, and sometimes as a preliminary filter to identify the need for more in-depth impact assessments relating to specific policy concerns or areas such as equality and health. There are, however, a number of technical, conceptual and methodological difficulties associated with the use of integration tools, and a certain amount of scepticism has to be to overcome in order that they are not seen as mechanical 'tick box' exercises. These include the difficulties of defining terms such as sustainable development; the weighting given to individual objectives; the difficulty of obtaining relevant and useful data; the problems of understanding complexity; the emphasis given to what is tangible and measurable as opposed to reflecting contradiction, indeterminacy and subjectivity; problems of timescale and assessing the impacts over different timeframes; the value judgements of appraisers and balancing the multiplicity of their perspectives. Such appraisals can be viewed as an added burden on an already heavy workload, and their use tends to be confined to experts rather than including all stakeholders including politicians and the public. Finally, policy integration tools are essentially concerned with integrated government and may not automatically deliver sustainable development outcomes. Nevertheless, the use of such tools presents a useful framework for considering a wide range of issues within a deliberative forum.

6.52   One area in which sustainable development practice has informed the development of some community strategies is evaluation. The need to devise effective frameworks to represent and measure sustainable development solutions have resulted in the development of quality of life indicators. This approach has been adopted as an evaluatory framework to measure the success of community strategies. This is attractive as it is based on outcome-focused perspectives representing interventions from a number of organisations acting collectively. There are numerous technical and methodological problems to overcome in devising such frameworks including choice of timeframe, the number and nature of individual indicators, attribution and causality, the overly quantitative nature of the data sets, and data collection and reporting. However, these have considerable merit over narrow output-orientated performance management regimes typical of a number of community strategies interrogated in the research, and have the potential to be compared with similar headline indicator sets in other areas at a national level.

6.53 In many ways, the treatment of equality issues within community strategies is similar to that with sustainable development. Although it is recognised as important, little indication is provided as to how it will figure in the subsequent community planning process. A focus group of local authority equality officers considered that:

- in general, equality issues are not at the forefront of community strategies apart from passing references.
- Although they represent a huge opportunity for mainstreaming equality perspectives into the business of local councils and other organisations, the opportunity was being missed.
- In particular, equality champions and officers were not involved in the community strategy process.
- Although the adoption of the generic equality standard in local government was a key plank in the approach to equality in most councils, few connections had been made between this process and the preparation of the community strategies.
- Generic integration tools did not give enough regard to equality issues; they must lead on to equality impact assessments.

6.54 The Welsh Language Board considered that the attempts made to reflect Welsh language issues within community strategies were insufficient with the notable exceptions of the Isle of Anglesey and Rhondda Cynon Taff. It believed that future statutory guidance on local councils and other public bodies should be far more prescriptive and binding on this matter, both to ensure compliance but also to offer advice and best practice.

6.55 Undoubtedly, the equality agenda is highly problematical requiring balancing tensions between the imperatives of standardisation and diversity of need; between developing a culture based on compliance and enforcement of statutory legislation and legal rights as opposed to the promotion of equality in service practice and policy; and the tension between the increasing fragmentation of equality streams as against a strategy of integration and mainstreaming (Sullivan et al, 2004) framework offers an important, but as yet largely unrealised, opportunity for making a real contribution to the equality agenda.

> ### Recommendation 13:
> ### Managing Cross Cutting Issues (for Community Strategy Partnerships)
>
> The conversion of good intentions in relation to equality, the Welsh language and sustainable development into meaningful action requires a concerted effort to integrate cross cutting perspectives into the design, delivery and evaluation of community strategies. Although policy integration tools have a part to play they need to be accompanied by a range of other measures to be effective including training, awareness raising, facilitative leadership and commitment, changes to organisational cultures, the involvement of champions, evaluatory frameworks and adequate resourcing.

Outcome-Focused Approach

6.56 Our view is that an effective approach to the rational planning model must be based on an outcome-focused perspective: one that concentrates on results and the impact of public policy interventions. Such an approach provides a way of connecting a vision statement to a means of judging success. It helps to operationalise the vision at a strategic level.

6.57 Outcome-focused approaches were not found to be a feature of the majority of community strategies, and many Action Plans were dominated by outputs, activities, targets and performance indicators, extracted mainly from other strategies. The reason for this, in the opinion of one community strategy manager, was that: *"it is too early - it was easier to put in existing outputs, activities and targets".*

6.58 One research workshop generated a wide discussion about outcome-focused frameworks. Although the general consensus was that this was the right approach, there were a number of problems identified with its effective application:

- They were very hard and often complex to devise.
- The could involve both objective measurements based on facts, but also qualitative information grounded in people's perceptions of reality.
- The problem of timescale was a difficult issue because results often differ depending on the timescales used, and a number of policy areas such as health inequalities and anti-poverty could not be meaningfully assessed for a very long time, sometimes inter-generational.
- Many outcomes were outside the control of local areas such as the economy or climate change.
- In dense social, economic and environmental policy spaces, it was exceedingly difficult to trace causal connections and attribute specific policy interventions to particular outcomes.

6.59 In addition, the workshop considered that it was vital to make a clear connection between an outcome and a responsible or accountable agency. This becomes more difficult where the actions of two or more agencies contribute to a particular outcome. The issue then becomes one of determining whether this is best approached by attempting to disentangle responsibility for particular contributions or endeavouring to construct collaborative accountability frameworks.

6.60 Currently, the view of the research group was that existing performance management frameworks conspired against this because they were based on different systems (for instance, WPI in local government and balanced scorecard in the NHS), and the tendency was to hold organisations to account singly through national performance indicators and targets. It was noted that there were some encouraging signs at a national level to encourage a greater focus on shared outcomes, in particular the shared outcome measures that are expected to emerge within the national performance management system for local government.

6.61 A number of community strategy partnerships such as the Isle of Anglesey, Caerphilly and Gwynedd are using a suite of quality of life indicators to measure the longer term success of the community strategy. These indicators have their roots in the work around sustainable development, and aim to provide a relatively small set of indicators covering the main social, economic and environmental areas. Suites of indicators exist at UK (DEFRA, 2005) levels and one consideration for local areas is whether to adopt similar frameworks to promote compatibility and comparison, or to develop additional or different indicators to reflect local considerations.

Figure 11: Performance Management in Caerphilly

- Alignment of four scrutiny committees to the strategic themes of the community strategy to encourage scrutiny from outside traditional service boundaries
- Work undertaken to develop partnership indicators for each of the four themes, both to assist agencies in monitoring contextual change and service performance and to provide transparency for citizens and communities. As part of this a headline basket of indicators will be reported on a regular basis
- Alignment of the community strategy and improvement plans to ensure that the council's three-year priorities accord with longer term objectives
- Awareness raising sessions with all senior managers on the linkages between the council and the community strategy planning processes.

(Source: Welsh Community Planning Officer's Network)

6.62 Caerphilly has taken steps to enhance the performance management of its community strategy through a number of mechanisms indicated in Figure 11 and Conwy has likewise attempted to use the key themes of the community strategy as the basis for its Performance Management Framework to avoid narrow departmentalism and functionality.

Recommendation 14:
Outcome-Focus (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

This approach to community strategies must be supported by outcome-focused frameworks to enable strategic level evaluation.

Model 2   Civic Renewal: Engaging with People and Communities

6.63 This model reflects a view that a community strategy is an important mechanism for engaging with people and communities. The key research question here is the effectiveness with which this has been achieved, and the extent to which people and communities have been involved more constructively and meaningfully in the decisions that affect the quality of their lives.

Framing Public Involvement

6.64 The general context is one where there exists a significant disengagement and disillusionment between citizens and democratic institutions, and customers and service providers. Turnouts at elections are poor, and trust in politicians and political processes are fragile particularly amongst particular groups in the population such as young people. In addition, the notion of public involvement is a highly contested and ambiguous one, and any judgement of effectiveness has to be grounded in a clear understanding of its conceptualisation and purpose.

6.65 A useful typology is to conceive public involvement in one of three ways. Firstly, as an end in itself through a belief in the notion of 'community' and the aim of building social capital and capacity amongst people and social groups. Secondly, public involvement can be viewed in terms of the aim of including people as integral to the decision making frameworks of local governance, and lastly, public involvement can be framed in terms of a customer relationship between people and the providers of service.

Approaches

6.66 In the community strategies in Wales, the challenge of involving the public has been tackled through various amounts of effort and different approaches. People have been engaged in a number of different identities as illustrated in Figure 12. The involvement techniques vary according to how citizens are framed, but the main distinction made in the work of the community strategies is one that differentiates between communities of space and communities of interest. Hence, the area-based approaches to community involvement, together with consultation with a wide range of diverse interest and voluntary groups and organisations.

Figure 12: Framing Participation

Framing of Identity	Participation Technique
as individual citizen	Surveys and questionnaires; road shows and exhibitions; newsletters; web sites; vox pop; citizen's panels
as a member of an area-based community	Public meetings; community and area forums; conferences; open space technology
as a member of a voluntary or special interest group	focus groups; consultation letters; meetings
as a member of a 'hard to reach' group	Festival or Congress; focus group; theatre in the community

Recommendation 15:
Multiple identities (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Most community strategy partnerships have recognised that citizens present with a number of different identities which need to be addressed in different ways. Also the purposes of public involvement can be varied as can the degrees to which individuals are empowered through particular techniques. There certainly is a need for greater clarity around purpose, and a need to reflect on whether existing approaches do offer the prospect of a co-evolution of solutions between people and public agencies.

6.67 Purpose is also an important consideration in examining the effectiveness of techniques used, and these vary between raising awareness, collecting views and opinions, consulting on draft proposals and establishing new participatory structures such as area forums. Participation can be seen as both a policy outcome in its own right as well as a means to an end. A number of particular issues are raised as a result of an examination of the different approaches set out above:

Traditional versus Innovative Methods

6.68 With few exceptions, the approach to public engagement involved familiar methods - questionnaires, public meetings, and stakeholder consultation - and encountered the usual difficulties in terms of response and representativeness. Nevertheless our feedback suggests that these overtures were considered to be well intentioned and welcome. A number of areas stand out in terms of their use of more creative and innovative methods such as Torfaen (Figure 13) with its Big Vision exercise and use of open space technology, and Rhondda Cynon Taff (Figure 12) with the use of vox pop.

Figure 13: Torfaen Public Involvement Strategy

- **Vox Pop:** in-depth interviews with 120 people of all ages; filmed and transferred into DVD format; critical incident analysis of raw footage.
- **Big Vision:** artist working with future images of Torfaen 2020 projected onto public buildings; quality of life satisfaction questionnaire; cost: £20k.
- **Open Space Consultation:** based on wards or groups of wards; 10 in total; open space training for 25 people from different organisations; facilitator's network.

Recommendation 16:
Innovations in practice (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Whilst there are examples of innovation and creativity in approaches to public engagement, traditional approaches dominated the development of many community strategies. Without championing the virtues of innovation for its own sake, more thought and experience needs to be brought to bear to introduce methodologies that can contribute to a more constructive dialogue between citizens and service providers.

Hard to Reach Groups

6.69   Although there was an understanding that particular groups, often referred to as hard to reach, required special engagement strategies using often unconventional and untried methodologies and techniques, practice in this area was unconvincing. There were no examples of coherent and suitably resourced strategies that aimed to address the concerns of disenfranchised and disadvantaged groups.

Figure 14: Youth Congress

A Youth Congress is designed to afford public and other agencies involved in the community strategy the opportunity of understanding issues that are important to young people and for them in turn to feedback information about policies and initiatives that are being designed to address them. The Congress involves over 300 people and events to date have included speakers, facilitated workshops and a real time survey using "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" handsets to poll the delegates on key issues that affect them such as leisure facilities, health, employment, crime and drugs. The Congress has been webcast live.

(Source: Welsh Community Planning Officers Network)

6.70   Mainstream participation strategies were used as the primary vehicle to engage with all groups with the exception of efforts to engage with special interests such as BME or disability groups who were sometimes engaged directly through discussion groups and consultation. However, there were examples of particular strategies devised to engage with young people using a variety of techniques such as festivals, theatres (Conwy) and a Congress in Cardiff (Figure 14).

Resourcing

6.71   Resourcing, capacity and expertise were identified in many areas as ongoing issues. Local councils tended to have to 'foot the bill' for many consultation exercises, although in some, there were contributions from other partners. Many initial budgetary allocations have now dried up, leaving question marks around what happens in the future.

6.72   The ongoing servicing of community and area forums is far from cost neutral. In some areas such as Bridgend, the task of public consultation was contracted out to the local voluntary sector primarily because of its established networks and links with community groups, and possibly because of its perceived independence from the Council. In Powys, very creative use of the Rural Community Action Programme was used to fund capacity building in the area forums.

6.73   Funding to support capacity building initiatives within local communities is a central thrust of the Welsh Assembly's Communities First programme, and lessons can be learnt from local experiences and practice across Wales (this is currently the subject of a long term evaluation exercise). In addition, ways in which capacity building and other participatory initiatives under the Communities first banner can be integrated with those within the domain of the community strategy should be explored.

Recommendation 17:
Capacity building and Resources (for Community Strategy Partnerships and Welsh Assembly Government)

People and communities need the skills and resources to enable them to converse on more equal terms with public servants and professionals. This requires resources for capacity building programmes, community development approaches and people to facilitate the process.

Area Based Approaches

6.74   Because of the dispersed nature of a number of local authority areas such as Powys, Denbighshire and Monmouthshire, a key focus of their approach to community involvement was through local area forums. Powys has as many as 15 whereas Monmouthshire has 4. Opinions as to their value range from being seen as 'talking shops' with no real power and made up of the usual suspects, to being viewed as useful additions to local governance. They were sometimes accused of being very parochial, only concerned with local issues and not able to understand so-called strategic issues. However, area forums are able to offer an important local spatial expression of community strategies particularly in terms of differences in needs and views.

6.75   Unquestionably, the discussion of area-based forums brings into sharp contrast the very real tensions that exist between representative and participatory forms of democracy. It appears that in a number of areas, elected representatives were excluded or downplayed their roles within the public involvement process in general and the area based committees in particular.

6.76   However, some are now rapidly concluding that successful local forums can potentially undermine and destabilise their representative legitimacy. This is particularly the case where political control has changed at the last local government elections in 2004, and the appetite for participatory democracy has waned or altered its course. In some cases, the move has been to seek a better connection between area forums and locally elected representatives and to find mechanisms where both can co-exist. The extent to which this is viewed as controlling as opposed to empowering is a matter of keen debate.

Recommendation 18:
Integrating participatory and representative approaches (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

The key challenge facing participatory approaches to public engagement encouraged through community strategies clearly rest in the receptiveness of the elected councillors to the challenge to their representative roles. It is highly unlikely that participatory models will replace representative structures or that participatory structures can exist in a vacuum. It is advisable that attempts should be made to dovetail the two and promote greater participatory democracy as a method of both improving the effectiveness of local councillors and enhancing local democracy. The success or otherwise of this is likely to unfold particularly in the context of local area committees and forums.

Real or Tokenistic?

6.77   A question that was raised on numerous occasions, particularly from voluntary and community groups, was the extent to which the 'public' was merely being used by the statutory sector to authenticate their community strategy in a tokenistic fashion, as opposed to genuinely intending to use the views and opinions of local people to guide and shape their decision making processes. The view of Wales Association of County Voluntary Councils, for instance, was that: *"Community strategy participation methods are only consultative rather than empowering, and that there is a major tension between participatory methods and representative government".*

6.78   Our evidence suggests that even though there were problems associated with approach and application, the efforts made to involve the public in most areas were genuine and well meaning. For some, it was also a relatively new process and one which they would learn from over time: *"there was a genuine desire to consult and engage and get the message across about Council constraints. At the start, it was seen as a token gesture but it evolved into a broader forum to consult and listen".*

6.79   A member of the voluntary sector in one authority considered that engagement was pitched merely at the level of consultation and information sharing. In his view this was not real engagement because this involves: *"providing opportunities to influence public agencies decision making processes and agenda setting".* Moreover, community groups are generally starved of resources and, hence, unable to move from consultation to real engagement.

6.80   Undoubtedly, many aspirations were raised merely as a result of approaching many communities that had been previously unfamiliar with such strategies. The problem for the local strategic partnerships centred on endeavouring to ensure transparency in decision making processes to enable the views of the community to be traced into the community strategies and action plans.

6.81   One of the research workshops organised through this project devoted its attention to the issue of citizen engagement in the community strategy process, and in the course of its deliberations a number of interesting discussion points were raised in addition to those considered above as follows:

Universal Engagement

6.82   Firstly, a strong view was advanced that universal engagement was highly unlikely given that a number of people and communities were reluctant to get involved in public affairs. Hence, the criteria for success needed to be modified accordingly.

Understanding Strategic Issues

6.83   Secondly, there was a keen discussion on whether it was possible for 'ordinary' citizens to have the capability of understanding so-called 'strategic' issues, or whether they were only interested in local domestic problems. Also, whether 'ordinary' people were only concerned with short term horizons and were disinclined to be engaged with long-term visions. Examples were cited

where visioning exercises had worked well, but also it was accepted that many communities were naturally anxious to see the fruits of their engagement realised quickly in terms of improvements to their quality of life.

6.84 On the question of 'understanding strategic issues', our view based on past experience and evidence, is that people can relate easily to litter, dog mess and community safety, but they can also relate to jobs, health and education which are often framed as strategic issues. The onus really lies on the architects and managers of the engagement process to devise methodologies that can foster effective participation. Making an artificial differentiation between strategic and local matters and implying that only professionals understand the former will only perpetuate a paternalistic stance towards citizens and local communities.

Over-Participation

6.85 Thirdly, the research workshop drew attention to a potential condition of 'consultation' fatigue caused by different agencies approaching people and communities for different purposes. The suggestion was that public bodies should seek to co-ordinate and streamline their consultation programmes. For instance, the forthcoming guidance on Local Development Plans requires an input from the community (Community Involvement Schemes), and certainly this needs to be integrated with community strategies.

Using Existing Processes

6.86 Fourthly, an important point made from a service manager was that over recent years, effective client, customer and community engagement processes had been built up particularly in the context of particular services such as housing and social care. It was argued that: *"in some areas, the corporate people running community strategies were unaware of these and they needed to build on them rather than inventing new processes just for the sake of the community strategy"*.

6.87 Further support for this position was provided through an acknowledgment that local authorities currently held considerable amounts of information about their local communities that they rarely use, and that the private sector was far more effective in isolating and personalising the needs of its customers.

Continuity and Transparency

6.88 Two fundamental issues face the future development of community strategies in relation to the public, and they are continuity and transparency. Having engaged with the public in various forms, what steps will be taken to involve them during the implementation and evaluation stages or in any reviews of the community strategy process?

6.89 Closely related to this, how will the public be able to link their opinions and representations to actions on the ground? One local government performance manager stated that: *"consultation needs to be continuous. We have to give the public feedback on what has been done, although I think it is difficult for the public to judge the community strategy".*

6.90 Many local strategic partnerships have not thought through the implications of a continuing role for public engagement post-strategy preparation, and whether the methods of involvement that were used at the formative stage are equally applicable at subsequent stages.

6.91 However, a number of community strategy partnerships have set in place a number of different mechanisms to continue a dialogue with its communities on a continuous basis, and examples of these include:

• Annual events such as conferences or workshops are used in Neath Port Talbot and Cardiff.
• Caerphilly intend to use citizen's panels in the future to gauge the success or otherwise of its community strategy.
• Rhondda Cynon Taff intend to use the vox pop technique to track public opinion (Figure 15).
• Web sites have been set up in Conwy and Carmarthenshire and annual reports have been prepared to communicate with the public.
• The area based and community partnerships that exist in places such as Powys and Caerphilly offer an ideal mechanism for an ongoing engagement and two-way interchange of views.

Figure 15: Rhondda Cynon Taff Public Involvement Strategy

• Consultation and questionnaire to area based partnership representatives
• Customised consultation with hard to reach group: Welsh language speakers, ethnic minority groups and the disability forum.
• Used 'postcard' methodology with Children and Young People
• Vox pop with sample of 550 people; 12 patches with 5/6 wards in each; framed in spatial terms; sampled on age; interactive DVD enabling search by topic, issue and area; re-interview in 5 years time

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Recommendation 19:
Engagement through the policy process (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Public involvement should not be viewed as a one-off event. Continuity and transparency are key components in a strategy making process that needs to devise appropriate opportunities to engage with people and communities on a continuous and open basis. Thought also needs to be given to co-ordinating engagement events irrespective of organisation or purpose. The new local development plan is an example of where public consultation needs to be integrated and co-ordinated.

Model 3   Network Governance: Working in Partnership

6.92 One of the main purposes of a community strategy is to encourage a partnership approach to the design and delivery of local services. This research study has examined the extent to which local partnership arrangements have been designed as 'fit for purpose' in terms of composition, accountability, role and machinery for the preparation of the strategies, and their likely appropriateness for the implementation of community strategies.

Collaboration

6.93 This model is based on the premise that the social, economic and environmental issues affecting local communities are complex and interdependent in nature, and as a consequence are not capable of resolution by single agencies acting autonomously. Hence, the answer is seen to lie in forms of local network governance where public, private and voluntary interests act collaboratively to manage and govern local communities. This policy model has resulted in a proliferation of different types of partnership across the country, and the idea of a local strategic partnership to manage the community strategy process is a further expression of this trend.

6.94 The broad thrust of this approach is highly seductive and certainly endorsed in principle in our conversations with stakeholders throughout Wales. However, on the basis of accumulated experience of partnership working over recent years, some reservations are beginning to be raised in relation to the number of partnerships, the difficulty of making connections between them, the problems associated with attendance, resourcing and servicing the partnership structures, and the rather unquestioning faith in the value of partnership working which for some has not been realised. A condition of 'partnership fatigue' was referred to in a number of instances.

6.95 One of the problems facing community strategies which do not offer the carrot of extra resources is that they have been introduced at a time when the value of partnerships is being scrutinised in more detail and judgements of their added value are being compared with more active engagement in the many other partnerships such as the Community Safety Partnership, the Health, Social Care and Well Being Partnerships and the Children and Young People's Partnerships which have a clearer and more limited policy focus, and quite often the prospect of additional resources.

Motivation

6.96 The concept of partnership is open to some interpretation and the motivation to engage in this form of governance varies between being forced to through government mandate; needing to in order to share or lever in resources from other organisations; wanting to because of a desire to legitimise and enhance the status of their organisation; and being driven to as a result of an altruistic response to centre public service provision in citizen centred services and public sector values.

6.97 Evidence from mainly Council interests suggested that some statutory agencies were reluctant to enter into constructive community strategy partnerships because they were not subject to a legal duty in the same way that Councils were. The absence of resources was cited on numerous occasions as a reason for some lack of momentum in some local strategic partnerships; the amorphous, comprehensive and complex nature of the agenda was another; the absence of a dedicated community of interest was another; and, finally the status of the partnership in relation to others with perceived more legitimacy and benefit gave further grounds for concern.

6.98 Our evaluation focused in considerable depth on the viability and effectiveness of the community strategy partnerships created to manage the community strategy process and a number of issues arose from this work which we now discuss under the main headings of models, membership, convenorship and leadership, accountability and reporting, servicing and resourcing, individual and group training, organisation and training and partnership performance.

Models: Structure, Representation and Purpose

6.99 The architects of community planning are confronted with the twin problems of designing effective structures that are both inclusive of a wide and diverse range of stakeholders, but at the same time are capable of being managed efficiently. A number of models have emerged across Wales but in the main they are variations on a similar theme. The majority are entirely new partnerships, but a few, such as in Rhondda Cynon Taff and the Vale of Glamorgan (Figure 13), have developed from existing regeneration partnerships. Using existing structures, if they are perceived to work and be effective, as the basis of forming community strategy partnerships makes sense in terms of avoiding the setting up costs of new groups, but it does risk problems associated with assimilating new and existing members, and of broadening the regeneration agenda to include the wider community strategy agenda.

6.100 A number of partnerships have been set up consisting of a relatively large membership aimed at reflecting a cross section of interests across local civic society. These are often linked to a smaller group of predominantly public and statutory sector interests whose remit it is to oversee and co-ordinate the preparation of the community strategy. The potential problems associated with this model include the nature of the links between the groups, the respective functions of each and forms of accountability, and the danger of creating an inner and outer group.

6.101 Other areas have moved towards the creation of community strategy partnerships with high level representation from the main public, private and voluntary interests. These are relatively small, manageable groups who, in turn, are supported by an officers group (mainly, but not exclusively, Council officers) tasked with servicing the main board or partnership.

6.102 The core purpose of community strategy partnerships to date has been the preparation of community strategies, but the arrival of the implementation stage has thrown into sharper focus the need for greater clarity of purpose of the roles of the group. A number of partnerships are currently reviewing their terms of reference and roles, and attempting to get a fix on whether their purposes are advisory, networking, information exchange, consultative, scrutinising, sounding board or executive decision making bodies.

6.103 A critical issue is how the community strategy partnership affects the behaviour of other, particularly statutory partnerships such as the Crime and Community Safety Partnerships and the Health, Social Care and Well Being Partnerships that make up the local partnership machinery. Can they direct the actions of these partnerships or do they influence through other means? The purpose of the community strategy partnership is not to duplicate the functions of these but to work with them to offer a united and co-ordinated front to the practice of local governance.

6.104 Whereas existing partnerships were already in place for most of the key policy areas, in many areas, no such arrangements existed for environmental issues. As a consequence, this gap has been filled by the creation of new partnerships, although our feedback suggests that they have faced a number of problems. For instance, their early stage of development has precluded some from being able to provide a well-researched and integrated environmental contribution to the design of community strategies. Bringing together the disparate elements of the environment portfolio which includes transport, land use planning, biodiversity, waste management and sustainable development is a considerable challenge and one which obviously takes time to achieve integration and consensus from a wide range of interests. In addition, the lack of statutory underpinning to environmental partnerships, and the lack of resources for servicing and co-ordination have tended to dilute commitment.

6.105 Our evidence points to the many different views on the nature and role of community strategy partnerships, and that these are invariably grounded in different reasons for engaging in the partnership. There is a lack of clarity about role, and a sense that community strategy partnerships are inferior to other statutory partnerships in terms of power, profile and status. To some extent, ambiguity may be acceptable at a formative stage of the strategy process, but certainly the delivery stage requires a sharpened exposition of role and purpose. In particular, the relationship between the community strategy partnership and other partnerships (which are often seen as the delivery agents) is critical.

6.106 In terms of representation on local partnerships, our feedback indicates that, in the main, they broadly reflect the main public, private and voluntary interests and sectors in their areas (Figure 16). However, there are invariably careful balances to be made at the periphery in terms of who and who not to include, and these judgements must be resolved locally.

6.107 A number of specific issues arose during the course of the research analysis
and these are grouped under the headings of reflecting community interests,
creating a dialogue with the business sector, achieving public sector commitment,
council domination and political commitment.

Reflecting Community Interests

6.108 Community strategy partnerships face the challenge of how to fairly
and effectively represent the range and variety of voluntary and community
interests working in their areas. Do they work with existing umbrella and specific
interests, and if so which ones? And/or are attempts made to represent these
interests through new forms of representation. Typically, local Councils for
Voluntary Services are considered to be the legitimate voice of community and
voluntary interests. However, in some partnerships other specific voluntary
bodies that are particularly active or seen to be important in that context are
included. The problem often for the voluntary sector is how best to arrange their
representation to embrace a very wide constituency of interests. The Better Life
Consortium in Rhondda Cynon Taff use the one-thirds principle to ensure a fair
representation from the voluntary sector and the local Council for Voluntary
Services (Interlink) arrange elections to determine who should represent the
voluntary sector.

6.109 A meeting of the Wales Association of County Voluntary Councils offered a
number of interesting reflections on the involvement of the voluntary sector:

- There is a need for resources to increase the capacity of the voluntary sector
  to engage equally with other sectors in community strategy partnerships
  and other participative processes. In Rhondda Cynon Taff for example,
  the existence of a large number of both policy and area based partnerships
  severely stretched the capacity of the voluntary sector to participate in them.
- Welsh Assembly guidance needs to be more prescriptive in terms of involving
  the voluntary sector: *"the best Councils are no problem but the worst will do
  as little as possible".*
- Local CVCs are heavily involved in a number of community strategies;
  in Bridgend, it undertook the consultation exercise, and in Powys it is involved
  in the 15 area forums.
- Community strategies have had a direct influence on the voluntary sector
  in Neath Port Talbot where forum structures have been changed to align with
  the community strategy themes; and in Swansea where the £2m compact
  grants were linked to the main community strategy themes.

- In the context of there being a large number of partnerships in most areas of perceived differential importance, apart from potential conflict and questionable ownership, the voluntary sector faced the challenge of which partnerships to give the greatest priority.

Creating a Dialogue with the Business Sector

6.110 The difficulty of engaging with the business community was identified as a common problem across Wales. Currently on the community strategy partnerships, this is usually attempted through representatives from the local Chambers of Commerce and/or prominent local companies who consider civic engagement as part of their corporate social responsibilities. However, local authority sources suggest that this engagement has not been effective. Stereotypically, the business sector is mainly seen to be interested in land use development, business rates and grants, and has little appetite for lengthy decision making processes. In fact, interviews with representatives of the business community report that their views of the bureaucratic nature of local councils and other organs of government have often been confirmed by the protracted decision making processes involved in formulating community strategies, reinforced by their scepticism as to whether any action will follow this effort. The frequency and timing of partnership meetings are seen as a barrier to local business involvement in community strategy partnerships.

6.111 Clearly, in the view of national organisations such as the Wales CBI, business processes do not respect local authority areas, and regional perspectives such as the Wales Spatial Plan and Regional Economic Fora are considered to be a more appropriate and better use of their limited resources.

6.112 There is a need for more focus and creativity in terms of devising mechanisms for engaging with local business interests. These have to appeal to their, perhaps narrow self-interests, and to be delivered within the resource constraints available to them. It is more likely that this engagement will succeed if it is organised around specific projects rather than more general strategic management and longer term policy developments.

Achieving Public Sector Commitment

6.113 In the opinion of a number of Council interests, a less than full commitment to the community strategy partnership has been forthcoming from other public sector interests operating within their areas. The charge is that the absence of a statutory duty to co-operate reinforces this recalcitrance, and with the exception of representation on community strategy partnership and associated structures, real engagement has been lukewarm and few resources have been channelled into the community strategy process to augment local authority efforts. This lack of commitment is often seen to be evidenced in ephemeral attendance at partnerships meetings, delegation to more junior officers and a largely passive approach to agenda setting and sharing workloads.

6.114 In their defence, many ASPBs for instance, point out that they are faced with considerable resource problems when faced with having to engage with a large number of local strategic partnerships across Wales. Their regional organisation, focus and business planning arrangements also encourage a different perspective and level of analysis. In addition, the first call on the limited resources

of bodies such as LHBs and Health Trusts is considered to lie in the servicing and management of their own policy based partnerships - in this example, the Health, Social Care and Well Being Partnerships. There has to be a considerable degree of sympathy with this position given the very real problems faced by any complex strategic partnership in achieving its purposes effectively.

6.115 Whilst, commitment and engagement of public bodies other than local councils is viewed by some as being somewhat diluted in general, there are local examples to the contrary. For instance, the Environment Agency Wales see community strategies as a business opportunity and one for promoting its interests within a wider social and economic agenda. It stands out as the agency that has attempted to engage the most with community strategy processes at both national and local levels. It has produced national guidance on making connections between its work and community strategies, and local managers regularly support local strategic partnerships. The important message here from this example is the ability of local community partnerships to clearly align different self-interests - to convince agencies working collaboratively that they will gain in a very specific way with this form of collective organising. The rhetoric of partnership needs to be converted into the measurable business benefits of this model, and these will differ for different organisations. What will be achieved working in partnership that would not have been achieved from working independently? It is not sufficient to sustain this premise through a matter of faith, but to convert it into realisable benefits that can be used to cement the commitment and engagement of a number of public agencies working together.

6.116 One important development occurring in Wales that might impact on the type and level of commitment of the ASBP community within community strategies is the merger proposals heralded by the Making the Connections agenda. The first stage of this process will result in the mergers of the WTB, WDA and ELWa into existing divisions of Welsh Assembly Government. Obviously, this presents individual Assembly ministers and divisional directors with the ability to instruct their departments to follow prescribed courses of action in relation to local community strategy partnerships. However, questions of resourcing and scale of engagement will need to be resolved.

Council-Domination

6.117 There is no escaping the conclusion that, in the opinion of many stakeholders from outside the Council including the voluntary sector and other public bodies, the community strategy is seen as essentially a Council-dominated exercise. The fact that the duty lies singly on the Council and that the process is invariably resourced and directed by the Council and its staff, do little to counter this impression. This is a very worrying finding because the architects of the legislation introducing community strategies clearly viewed them as strategic expressions of all public and other bodies governing in a local area, and critically as a demonstration of a council's ability to discharge its community leadership role. A not uncommon view expressed in the research was that local councils fail to interpret their community leadership role in other than a dictatorial fashion. So, rather than being facilitative and catalytic, they are perceived as being controlling and oppressive in style.

6.118 Community leadership is undoubtedly a very difficult role to undertake - one that demands a fundamentally different approach to community engagement and empowerment. It requires an ability to express a sense of collective and community purpose, but needs to be delivered in a manner that is inclusive and accountable. Critically, its starting point must be a commitment to the design and delivery of citizen-centred and client-focused services - key principles underpinning the Making the Connections agenda. This has implications for existing roles and responsibilities, and the manner in which they are organised. Local councils face drawing a fine line between the need to offer direction and leadership, but without appearing to be intrusive and controlling. This will remain a constant challenge.

Political Commitment

6.119 The degree of political commitment from democratically elected members to community strategies is seen to be problematic in some areas. This is evidenced in a number of ways in the research:

- In all three case studies examined in the study, the political persuasion of the controlling party has changed during the preparation of the community strategy. The issue of continuity of approach between successive political administrations is clearly an issue as is starkly demonstrated in the case of Denbighshire.
- The strength of political commitment to the community strategy process is sometimes gauged from the type of involvement of the leader and other key members of the Council. Visibility, rightly or wrongly, is often equated with level of commitment and vice versa.
- One concern surfaced in some local councils focused on the ways in which community strategy matters were integrated within formal political processes, structures and decision making frameworks. In some, this was seen to occur in an ad hoc manner depending on the inclination and judgement of key officers.

6.120 In Caerphilly, formal links between the community strategy and the political structure is encouraged through the re-organisation of scrutiny committees to match community strategy policy objectives. This promotes a cross cutting approach by breaking traditional links between committees and service departments, and offers a forum for 'backbenchers' to articulate their function as community representatives and scrutineers.

Membership: Experience, Expertise and Status

6.121 A number of comments and views were advanced on the question of the type of membership on local strategic partnerships. A common view was that it was important to have the 'right' people to develop and sustain effective partnership working. In fact, many people went as far as to suggest that effective partnerships were highly dependent on the quality of personal relationships, and the degree of trust that was built up between them over a period of time. The true test of this was considered by one observer to be: *"whether you can fall out but not damage the long term relationship".* In this context, it was considered that losing key people from partnerships was often problematic because it de-stabilised the group and needed time to engage with new members.

6.122 The question of seniority was considered to be an important factor in some instances. Regular engagement of high level political and executive representation was seen to reinforce the message that the community strategy was important. It added both legitimacy to the process and the potential for real influence in the partnering organisations. However, status issues were seen by some as a source of concern where there were marked power disparities between representatives from different agencies and sectors which sometimes inhibited effective participation. Comments from some voluntary sector representatives underlined the difficulties they faced in gaining the confidence to participate effectively in formal business meetings. There are lessons here for the way in which partnership meetings are organised, their level of formality, and the quality of chairing.

6.123 The selection of who should comprise a community strategy partnership depends fundamentally on the role that partnership is expected to undertake. As the discussion above notes, this differs between being advisory, consultative and executive decision making. In one model, for example in Newport, the intention is to create a tight and high level Board of representatives from the key public agencies managing in the area. In others, membership is more diverse, reflecting perhaps, a lack of clarity around purpose. A particular issue that has been raised in most partnerships is whether the membership that was in place to oversee the preparation of the community strategy is fit for the purpose of implementation. Whilst the focus of action between design and delivery is different, there are problems in making an artificial separation between strategy makers and implementers. (Mintzberg, 1998).

6.124 In our view, a radical shake-up of membership to reflect this dichotomy is problematic, and continuity of membership is a better outcome. However, any community strategy partnership needs to review the appropriateness of its membership on a regular basis, and to avoid 'groupthink' and to encourage innovation and new ideas, a recruitment of new members should be promoted to contribute to the health and vitality of the partnership.

Convenorship and Leadership

6.125 Who convenes local strategic partnerships, who takes the lead and how the leadership function is discharged are all important factors in the dynamics of successful partnerships. Inevitably, local councils have taken the lead in convening the local partnerships and some have maintained a certain amount of control through the chairing and other arrangements. Others, such as Denbighshire, have selected chairs from outside the Council in an attempt to counter the impression that they are not exclusively Council artefacts[4].

6.126 Many partnerships have made efforts to distribute or share the leadership amongst different organisations through specific sub-groups. This method is used successfully in the view of a number of people interviewed in Community Safety Partnerships (Figure 17). Here, leadership is shared out between different agencies in relation to particular multi-agency task groups.

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[4] A survey conducted by Welsh Assembly Government in March 2006 reported that the Council chaired the community strategy partnership in 12 areas; the Community and Town Council in 1 area; a business partner in 1 area; an ASPB in 1 area; and 7 did not reply to the survey.

Figure 17: The Community Safety Partnership Model

- Joint duty on local authority and police.
- High profile issue with clear policy focus.
- Evidence-based approach through community safety audit.
- Community safety strategies.
- Annual action plans delivered through multi-agency task groups focused on defined themes.
- Shared leadership for task groups.
- Some budget allocation.
- Dedicated crime and community safety co-ordinator.
- Action plans linked to targets and indicators and performance reported to overall partnership boards.

Recommendation 21:
Community Leadership (for local government)

Community strategies provide the ideal vehicle for demonstrating a local council's community leadership role. This requires a measure of sensitivity to the roles, responsibilities and functions of other public agencies, private sector organisations and the voluntary sector. It demands a style of political and executive leadership that is facilitative and catalytic rather than directive, controlling and stifling. This has yet to be realised in some areas and could benefit from skilled support and development from key bodies such as the WLGA.

Accountability and Reporting

6.127 One of the enduring problems of partnerships is that of accountability. Who are individuals on the partnership accountable to: to their home organisations or to the partnership? Are there forms of collaborative accountability or is this dispersed back to individual organisations? One local government manager considered that: *"the biggest problem with the community strategy partnership was the lack of clear governance arrangements and lack of accountability".*

6.128 Currently, the prevailing view is that members of local strategic partnerships represent an organisation or sector and act as a conduit between the two. Certainly, decisions of the partnerships are not generally seen as binding, but are generally advisory in character.

6.129 The key challenge for the local strategic partnerships is not just how they interface with individual organisations, but how they engage with the main policy-based partnerships which are primarily responsible for delivery. Currently, this relationship has tended to be consultative, undefined and flexible as befits the formative stages of the community strategy process. However, the ability to hold people and agencies to account is likely to necessitate a stronger discipline in the delivery stage and the performance monitoring of action plans is evidence of this. Whether this exercise is duplicating what is undertaken at other levels and what action local strategic partnerships can take in the face of under-achievement are open to question.

6.130 One method, used in a number of partnerships, of attempting to secure an effective connection between community strategy partnerships and the other partnerships has been to arrange joint representation through the chairs of the themed group or other suitable individuals. Their role is to feed, share and communicate information between partnerships in both directions to raise awareness and knowledge of each other's agendas. In the course of such exchanges, areas of opportunity, overlap and co-ordination can be identified.

> **Recommendation 22:**
> **Accountability and Governance (for Community Strategy Partnerships)**
>
> Following on from clarity around role, decisions have to be made about accountability and governance arrangements. They need to be tighter, more transparent and related to suitable performance management frameworks. These should not attempt to duplicate the monitoring functions of other partnerships but be tailored to the projected outcomes of the community strategy.

Servicing and Resourcing

6.131 Partnership processes require servicing, support and resources. As discussed earlier in this report, in the view of many Council stakeholders, this burden has fallen disproportionately on local Councils and apart from a few instances where a small financial contribution has been provided for assistance with the costs of public consultation exercises, partner contributions have been made in terms of staff time. Dedicated staff resources in local authorities are modest with many officers combining community strategy tasks with other responsibilities.

6.132 There are some concerns over the organisational status of some community strategy staff, their general level of experience and expertise in highly complex strategic management processes, the positioning of the function at the corporate centre of local authorities, and the implications of the centre-service department relationship.

Individual and Group Training

6.133 There is a growing recognition that the effectiveness of partnership working is enhanced by appropriate capacity building and development at both individual and group levels. Working in this mode of governance requires a distinct set of skills and behaviours which are materially different from managing in conventional forms of governance. They relate to building effective personal relationships; networking; influencing; facilitative leadership; managing complexity; and a propensity for innovation and creativity. However, the focus of training and development in the public sector remains focused on promoting professional and technical competence in discrete areas of specialism. This approach appears to be short sighted given the growing interdependence between complex issues in society and the need to promote boundary spanning capabilities (Williams, 2000) into public sector managers. However, the Public Service Management Wales programme is attempting to respond to this demand through its mission to

develop a more relevant cadre of public sector managers who can work effectively both on an inter-sector and inter-organisational basis.

6.134 In addition, in a number of interviews, there was recognition of the need for these types of competencies, but, we found little evidence of coherent, sustained and comprehensive learning and capacity initiatives associated with community strategy partnerships. There were a few examples of limited partnership skills training in some areas such as facilitation.

Organisation and Profile

6.135 In most partnerships, particularly the case studies, the general view of the housekeeping arrangements was that they were conducted in a business-like fashion despite limited resources. The main areas of irritation included the dominance of the Council in setting agendas; the absence of forward planning; cancelling meetings at short notice; and the ephemeral attendance of certain representatives and/or constant delegation to others more junior in status (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Images of Community Strategy Partnerships

- "the partnership group has no power, limited responsibility and very limited authority"; "the group has no power at all, only the power of persuasion and embarrassment"; "it is not a decision making partnership, it is a rubber stamping group for the Council"
- "the decisions of the partnership group are not binding on any organisation"; "I can't have the group telling me what to do in terms of policies and finances"
- "there is insufficient buy-in from the highest levels in the partner organisations"; "the level of commitment is flaky": "the ability to network and speak to others is a strength, but I am yet to be convinced that the enthusiasm is there to make the strategy a working document"
- "consistency of attendance is an issue; the meeting cycle is too ephemeral, and there is little continuity between agenda items"

Source: Case Studies and Research Workshops

6.136 Contributions from a number of stakeholders drew attention to issues relating to a lack of awareness, poor communication and a lack of penetration of community strategy matters within organisations, particularly local councils as illustrated by the comments assembled in Figure 19. The question of penetration, in terms of awareness, understanding and involvement in these organisations, are critical concerns for the successful implementation of the strategies.

6.137 A common view was that community strategy matters were peripheral concerns to the bulk of public sector staff, often not transferring from the corporate centre or service heads. Some strategies are in place to counter these problems including the use of web sites, intranets, staff/team briefings and newsletters. Monmouthshire County Council has embarked upon an authority-wide awareness raising programme in an effort to raise general awareness levels,

and Rhondda Cynon Taff has involved the marketing team in its authority to raise awareness of partnerships and the community strategy in its area.

6.138 On the more general matter of the locus of ownership of community strategies, there is a concern that it is limited, perhaps to a few at the corporate centre who have formal responsibility for the management of the community strategy process. This point is made by a local authority service manager: *"We don't have ownership of the document - it is too encompassing and aspirational"*. There is also the accusation from local authority interests that: *"We have put together quite a good strategy but officers in other organisations have not signed up - there seems to be a problem of communication".*

Figure 19: Penetration of Community Strategy

"Understanding of the community strategy isn't good enough in the Council because the community planning process is kept at too high a level"

"My level in the Council is utterly disenfranchised with the community strategy; it is seen as the corporate support's baby"

"Not many people know about the community strategy in the Council - there has been no training or awareness"

"There is no level of the community strategy below strategic level which is a consequence of people being overwhelmed by strategies"

"At the moment, it is a top down process with not enough involvement at the service level - it is driven by the centre"

"We provided some initial input into the strategy but have not been involved for a long time"

"If you go below two tiers of management, the rest of the core staff don't know anything about the community strategy"

"I think the community strategy is working; it has taken a while to get to where we are with the community strategy, but I think it is an appropriate vehicle. Last year, I felt that I could utilise the process to inform my work and strategies, but it has taken a few years to get here"

"There are arrangements in place to promote horizontal and vertical integration. There has been a lot of work done on horizontal work to ensure a cross cutting approach"

"Awareness has increased which has led to more people pushing it; middle management influences service areas and senior officers"

Source: Case Studies

6.139 Far stronger identification is evident at a thematic level where there is a clearer focus and association around a professional community of interest; a point re-enforced by the following two comments: *"There is more ownership of the themed strategies such as the HSCWB strategy, and more vitality at the thematic levels where there is more power and status"; "The HSCWB strategy means more to the NHS than the community strategy".* Critically, accountability for results is considered to lie in these partnerships and not with the community strategy.

Partnership Performance

6.140 Although community strategies are essentially designed to impact on the quality of lives of citizens in an area and deliver a wide range of social, economic and environmental outcomes, community strategy partnerships can be made the subject of outcomes in their own right in relation to the process. This particular method of organising to achieve social results is one that needs scrutiny to determine whether it is superior to traditional approaches based on organisations working independently. Collaborative capability, levels of trust and inclusivity are measures that might be examined to evaluate the effectiveness of this model.

6.141 To this end, a number of areas including the Vale of Glamorgan, Denbighshire, Conwy, Caerphilly and Cardiff have used partnership health checks in order to take stock of the robustness, effectiveness and performance of local partnership machinery. In Rhondda Cynon Taff, Interlink, the local council for voluntary services, has developed its own partnership health check and which is being promoted to all partnerships in the area.

Recommendation 23:
Reviews (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Working in partnership is complex, demanding and dynamic. It requires constant reappraisal in view of changing circumstances, legislation and experience. Robust partnerships will need to have in place arrangements to regularly review their performance both in terms of substance and in relation to process.

Model 4 Multi-level Governance: Managing Within and Between Tiers

6.142 The notion of network governance described above relates to a particular tier or level and involves public, private and voluntary organisations working together to achieve common purposes. The same general principles can be applied to the task of working collaboratively and vertically between tiers - community, local, regional, national, UK and European. However, the task is made more complicated if one considers that each of the different tiers face additional problems of managing across different organisations and sectors. The key research questions for this study are to what extent do community strategies play a meaningful role in promoting coherence and co-ordination within and between the different levels of governance? Is it a mechanism that can mediate the relationship between the different levels, both helping to deliver higher level objectives, but also a means of informing and shaping the design of particular policy interventions?

6.143 A critical relationship revolves around the interface between national government as the superordinate authority in the form of the Welsh Assembly and local government. It is typically a highly contested interface characterised by resource and policy settlements balancing the forces for central direction and prescription against the need for local discretion and autonomy. A key question for this study concerns how these are resolved in the context of community strategies.

6.144 There are also a number of key national public stakeholders in Wales who have a particular contribution to play in relation to community strategies. They are the ASPBs, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Wales Audit Office. The ASPBs collectively manage significant resources in relation to key policy areas such as economic development and education. Their role in helping to deliver effective local community strategies is vital. In a different way, the WLGA as the representative arm of local government has wide influence amongst its constituents and as a lobbying body in relation to others. The question is does it use its influence effectively in relation to the development of community strategies? The Wales Audit Office is a powerful agent in terms of both regulation and improvement. Is this role discharged to best effect? Lastly, do these national stakeholders work together to present a co-ordinated and common front in pursuit of successful community strategies throughout Wales?

6.145 Because of the nature of the current devolution settlement in Wales, UK government has a direct control in particular policy areas such as the Police and Probation Service, and evidence from the evaluation points to some problems as a result. Two final areas of focus concern the tiers of governance directly above and below the local governance level. Below are the Town and Community Councils which make up the lowest tier of representative democracy, and above is a partly undefined but increasingly important regional dimension, and the role of community strategies in relation to these have been explored.

Welsh Assembly Government and Local Government

Lack of Integration between Policy Initiatives

6.146 During the course of the evaluation, it was frequently asserted by local government and voluntary sector interests that the Assembly was not 'joined-up', and that it was guilty of initiating policy that was often seen to be excessive in terms of the number of different initiatives, overly prescriptive in content and design, and often contradictory and inconsistent when applied at a local level.

Figure 20: Policy Integration with Community Strategy

Communities First

- Managed from within the Communities Directorate.
- 142 communities first areas throughout Wales; every local authority has at least one partnership but 60% are concentrated in 5 areas.
- WAG supply resources for co-ordinators.
- Local partnerships have to prepare 10 year strategies and action plans.
- Local delivery depends upon multi-agency actions and "bending mainstream budgets to meet local needs".
- Some tensions evident between top-down and bottom up approaches.
- The level of interaction between community strategies and communities first so far is partial at both national and local levels.

6.147 There is some substance to these views as, although the Assembly has published overarching strategic plans, policies in specific areas such as health and social care, education, economic regeneration and transport are managed and channelled vertically through separate divisions and accountable to different cabinet ministers. The impact of these tends to fall on specific departments of local authorities or on different sectors such as the NHS or higher educational establishments. Making sense of these in the context of a community strategy has proved to be very challenging.

6.148 The evaluation examined three major policy areas - Communities First, Health, Social Care and Well Being and the Wales Spatial Plan - to determine the extent to which they were integrated in, or informed local community strategies (Figure 20). Although references were made to them in Assembly guidance, little practical advice was forthcoming on how to make the connections locally. Integration was complicated by different accountability frameworks, resource streams, legislative requirements, planning cycles and performance management systems.

6.149 The Communities First Programme is a high profile national initiative designed to tackle areas of disadvantage and social inclusion. It has its own separate organisational machinery at local and national levels, together with a distinct community of practitioners and managers. However, despite the synergy between Communities First and Community Strategies, in all but a few cases such as Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taff, there was little linkage between the two. Similarly, many health and social care interests clearly regarded the HSCWB strategy as the overarching strategy and primary focus for their areas of work, particularly if it informed commissioning decisions. The overlap between the well being element of HSCWB strategies and the community strategy is one that remains to be tackled effectively in many areas.

Recommendation 24:
Policy Integration at National Level (for Welsh Assembly Government)

There is evidence to suggest that major Assembly initiatives such as Communities First, Heath, Social Care and Well Being Strategies, Local Development Plans and Community Strategies are not as coherent and integrated as might be expected particularly by stakeholders who face the challenge of making the connections (or not) at local level. The proposal for plan rationalisation is a constructive step in the right direction. Whether the aim of a fully integrated policy system is attainable is open to question. Perhaps, in the shorter term more effective co-ordination between different policy streams would be a more realistic proposition.

Lack of Awareness

6.150 Our evidence leads us to conclude that knowledge or recognition of community strategies is only loosely embedded in Assembly divisions other than the Local Government Policy Division, which itself has little resource capability. This invites the question as to whether the Local Government Policy Division is the best location for this function. One option would be to place this responsibility with the Strategic Policy Unit which is already responsible for corporate planning, the Wales Spatial Plan and the cross cutting themes of equality and sustainable development. The alternative is certainly to make better connections between the two divisions and to the corporate planning machinery in general.

Recommendation 25:
Location of Function (for Welsh Assembly Government)

Consideration needs to be given to whether the Local Government Policy Division is the best location to discharge the community strategy function. Given the cross cutting nature of the agenda, a strong case can be made to locate it at the corporate centre.

Informing National Priorities

6.151 A legitimate concern of local stakeholders is the use Welsh Assembly Government intends to make of both individual strategies and more particularly, the collective body of community strategies across Wales. Having imposed a deadline for submission, are they now going to be used to guide, inform or reshape Assembly objectives or stimulate new initiatives in particular areas? The desk top evaluation undertaken internally concluded that the majority of strategies were consistent with the broad thrust of the Assembly's strategic plan. However, in their current form, it is difficult to know what national messages can be extracted from the community strategies, and it is unclear what future use will be made of them in the policy process.

Plan Rationalisation

6.152 Although not available to inform the development of the first round of community strategies, the Assembly's proposals for plan rationalisation are

welcomed by local government. The case for plan rationalisation is set out in the Assembly's consultation paper (Welsh Assembly Government, 2005). It argues that the present system has little logic because it has developed over time in a piecemeal fashion; there is little evidence that it promotes a commitment to the achievement of key objectives and it fails to address delivery issues; it results in duplication and lack of co-ordination and inhibits partnership working; and that it places an unnecessary large burden in terms of staff time and other costs on local authorities. The aims of the new proposals, which have now been accepted following a period of consultation, are to focus on the local authority's high-level strategic contribution to national and local priorities, to reduce the burden of preparation and duplication of effort, and to encourage planning on the basis of the needs of citizens and communities rather than service specific needs.

6.153 The new arrangements require each local authority to prepare four high level strategies. The Community strategy remains as the overarching strategy for the area, setting a clear direction and set of strategic priorities over a 10-15 year timeframe. This strategy will be complemented by:

- A heath, social care and well being strategy which sets out their approaches to these issues in a wide context, including where appropriate strategic commissioning and delivery of NHS and local government services.
- A children and young people's plan which covers services for these groups including education.
- A local development plan which sets out the strategic vision for land use and its contribution to higher level objectives.

6.154 It is argued that these four strategies will cover "the greatest part of a local authority's capacity to improve the quality of life of their citizens". An initial proposal to include a strategy for environmental and sustainability issues has been rejected. The new system envisages community strategies complementing the implementation of the Wales Spatial Plan, with the Wales Spatial Plan setting out the vision, context and primary actions for each of the six planning regions across Wales, and the community strategies dealing with issues within their geographical areas. The consultation paper also suggests that the regional spatial planning units can provide a forum where community strategies can be discussed.

6.155 Below the level of high level strategies, the current arrangements require local authorities to prepare 34 different service specific plans. This requirement will now be allowed to expire and statutory requirements to review them will not be renewed. The intention is that the subject matter of these current plans is accommodated in one of the high level strategies, but not in the same amount of detail as present. Elsewhere, considerable flexibility is given to local authorities to develop planning structures and systems that most effectively secure citizen centred services. Issues of accountability are highlighted in the plan rationalisation proposals. Specifically, the Assembly maintain that:

- "that there is a need to ensure that community strategies express shared visions and outcomes in sufficient detail and provide a partnership framework for local policies working towards shared outcomes".
- "that they should adopt and use shared outcome indicators to give expression to visions and outcomes of community strategies and provide reliable means of evaluating progress".

6.156 The plan rationalisation measures clearly re-enforce the primacy of community strategies at the apex of the local strategic planning framework. The bonfire of service specific plans provides a huge opportunity for local authorities to develop planning systems across many policy areas, particularly to support the implementation of community strategies. These planning frameworks can be re-configured to reflect the need to jointly plan and integrate different services to support particular client needs. Plan rationalisation invites a review of current partnership arrangements, and a cull of some and a merger of others might be the most effective way forward. In terms of the higher level strategies, the partnerships responsible for their production need to work together to ensure effective co-ordination and communication. In the final analysis, the plan rationalisation measures must be viewed as a test of a local authority's competence and capability to undertake strategic management in a complex environment. Whether this is realised is conditional on a number of other factors including leadership, training and development.

Policy Agreements

6.157 Two other mechanisms impinge on the local-national government interface. Firstly, there are the policy agreements that are negotiated between the Assembly and local authorities which offer certain financial freedoms in exchange for the delivery of particular Assembly targets in prescribed policy areas. Logic dictates that these need to be integrated with community strategies.

Performance Management

6.158 Secondly, national government attempts to measure the performance of its local government colleagues through panoply of performance indicators. This system is constantly being scrutinised, tinkered with and reviewed. The acknowledgement of shared outcomes in the next round of indicators is certainly a step in the right direction in terms of the evaluation of community strategies. Also, the model of the Local Area Agreements currently being used in parts of England is worthy of examination.

> ### Recommendation 26:
> ### National Outcome and Performance Management Frameworks (for Welsh Assembly Government, the WLGA and the WAO)
>
> Welsh Assembly Government, the WLGA and the WAO can collectively assist the development of community strategies by helping to devise collaborative and consistent Performance Management Frameworks which lean towards outcome measurements. The model of Local Area Agreements currently being piloted in England, and the recent experience of Local Public Service agreements in England, could be explored in this context.

Community Strategies and other National Public Bodies

Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies

6.159 The formation of community strategies has involved the creation of various relationships with a number of influential national public bodies. The ASPB fraternity have engaged to varying degrees across Wales depending

on its commitment and the nature of local demand. However, integration is made more difficult: *"with public agencies that operate at levels other than local authority levels".* In the future, the merger of WDA, WTB and ELWa with the Welsh Assembly will give national government more control over the type and method of engagement with local community strategies than has been the case through exhortation reinforced by the remit letter mechanism.

The Welsh Local Government Association

6.160 The Welsh Local Government Association has a representative and facilitative role to perform in relation to community strategies. It is keen to promote the community leadership role of local authorities and effective community strategies are an important expression of this. A number of interviewees at local level suggested that it should be more proactive in terms of advice and support to local strategic partnerships on community planning matters. It is entirely possible that the WLGA has to date focused more on other aspects of the modernisation agenda such as performance management and political managements arrangements as addressing these issues has been the foremost concern of the membership of the WLGA. However, the WLGA recently emphasised the key importance of community leadership to the future development of local government in Wales and is determined to focus greater attention on working with local authorities to develop and support this function.

Recommendation 27:
Role of the WLGA (for the Welsh Local Government Association)

Given the importance of community strategies to the community leadership role of local authorities, the WLGA might consider ways in which it can enhance its role in terms of advice, guidance, support and training on aspects of community planning as part of an ongoing programme of work supporting the development of community leadership in Wales.

The Wales Audit Office

6.161 The newly created Wales Audit Office is a powerful agent in terms both of regulation and improvement. It, and its predecessor the Audit Commission in Wales, have been responsible for an initial national evaluation and for various improvement studies in individual authorities. Its regulatory function is framed within Wales Programme for Improvement with its provisions for risk assessments and improvement plans for individual services and corporate themes. Its view of the nature and purpose of community strategies and the extent to which individual authorities are delivering them will be very influential. The three components of vertical and horizontal integration of plans and strategies, citizen and customer involvement and partnership working are fundamental components of the WAO's evaluation template.

Community Strategies and UK Government

6.162 One important issue that was raised during the course of a number of interviews concerned the consequences of a number of public bodies, such as the Police and Probation Service, being primarily accountable to UK government. It was argued that local flexibility was inhibited by nationally imposed targets and

policy objectives set by, for example, the Home Office in relation to particular aspects of policing or community safety. For example, one local partnership wanted: *"action on drug and alcohol abuse and not violent crime which was the national objective".*

6.163 This situation is unlikely to change until these powers are devolved to the Welsh Assembly and/or bottom up processes are able to shape national priorities which allow for regional and local variations.

Community Strategies and Regional Perspectives

6.164 There is little evidence to suggest that the first round of community strategies have been prepared with adjoining authorities working together to reflect any regional perspectives. There are, however, a number of initiatives such as the Heads of the Valleys Initiative that bring a number of local authorities together, but are not informed by community planning frameworks. In addition, various other arrangements are in place to deliberate on the planning of services which require a broader spatial area than unitary authorities such as waste management, tourism and economic development.

6.165 More importantly, the thrust of the Wales Spatial Plan, which has attracted a high political profile within the Assembly, emphasises an important role for regional planning in Wales. It is managed by the Strategic Policy Unit to highlight the cross cutting nature of the framework, and it is an attempt to provide a spatial element to policy development and delivery. It is premised on the view that different parts of Wales have different needs, and that these should be reflected in resource allocation and prioritisation. Six new spatial divisions have been created as the basis upon which to devise policy priorities and direct national resource allocations. Representatives from public, private and voluntary groups in those areas make up planning groups. The new regions represent a key departure from the development of uniform national policies and offer a framework for local prioritisation.

6.166 Potentially this mechanism may compromise the future role of community strategies especially if it is linked to resource allocation mechanisms. Currently, the first round of community strategies appears not to be geared up to this challenge because of little cross border collaboration on strategies. As this agenda unfolds, it is imperative that a means of securing an effective interrelationship between these two mechanisms is found.

6.167 Certainly, it would be inappropriate to set up some kind of regional community strategy structures, and the best way forward seems to lie in terms of integration within any new regional planning frameworks. The business sector and current ASPBs would probably find it easier to work at a regional level than perhaps local government and the voluntary sector. However, for everyone, regional perspectives will present a new challenge to existing ways of working.

> **Recommendation 28:**
> **Regionalism (for Welsh Assembly Government and**
> **Local Government)**
>
> There is a powerful argument for considering public services at a level below national government and above that of local government. Many activities such as economic development, tourism and waste management do not respect local boundaries, and mechanisms are already in place to consider them at regional or sub-regional levels. The introduction of the 6 areas of the Wales Spatial Plan gives added prominence and impetus to this trend and one that community strategies ignore at their peril. If the spatial areas become frameworks for deliberating upon strategic priorities and resource allocation processes, community strategies risk being marginalised unless they are able to offer meaningful contribution. Clearer advice is necessary on this future relationship.

Community Strategies and Community and Town Councils

6.168 The involvement of the lowest tier of representative government - Community and Town Councils (730 in Wales) - was raised as an issue in a number of areas. The main problem was that it was felt by some such as One Voice Wales that they have tended to be squeezed out as a result of the focus of public consultation strategies based on participatory methods. The argument put forward was that as Councils with a democratic mandate, they should be afforded a much higher profile, and any future statutory guidance should re-inforce this view.

6.169 Setting aside the question of whether statutory guidance would be helpful, the role of Community and Town Councils needs to be fully recognised within the democratic and participatory governance of local community strategies. They are a legitimate component of an effective engagement strategy that seeks to promote widespread involvement in community strategy processes. A number of areas have sought to reflect the role of Community and Town Councils particularly through area based forums.

Model 5   The Learning Model

6.170 The Learning model views strategic management as a process of learning over time. It suggests that: "strategies emerge as people, sometimes acting individually but more often collectively, come to learn about a situation as well as their organisation's capability of dealing with it" (Mintzberg et al, 1998: 176). It rejects the prescriptive approaches of other models and has its roots in the literature around disjointed/logical incrementalism. There are a number of key premises of the learning model (Mintzberg et al, 1998) as follows:

- That because of the complexity and unpredictability of an inter-organisational environment, often coupled with a diffusion of knowledge bases necessary for strategic action, deliberate control is not effective, and strategy making must take the form of learning over time with formulation and implementation being indistinguishable in part.

- Although learning is expected from leaders, it is the collective system that offers the main learning potential with potential strategist at all points in an organisation.
- The learning proceeds in an emergent fashion as a result of behaviour that stimulates retrospective thinking and acting as a sense making tool.
- The role of leadership in this model is not to preconceive deliberate strategies, but to manage a process of strategic learning to generate novel strategies.
- Strategies first appear as patterns out of the past, only later as plans for the future, and ultimately as perspectives to guide overall behaviour.

6.171 The idea that there are limits on the ability to devise deliberate strategies through controlled managerial actions may be highly relevant in the context of community strategies. The alterative notion of an emergent strategy that emphasises individual, organisational and inter-organisational learning may prove to be a more realistic option. It also acknowledges the ability to experiment, and shifts the onus of strategic leadership to all levels of an organisation. Models of strategic venturing (Burgelman, 1983) highlight the role of front line and middle managers in developing strategic initiatives and the need for top managers to be sensitive to the requirements of establishing a fertile organisational architecture and culture.

6.172 There is a considerable body of literature on organisational learning (Senge, 1990) including considerable contested debate on its nature. Palmer and Hardy (2000) consider it to encompass both the acquisition of new knowledge and its translation into organisational action. A key debate centres on whether organisational learning is an individual or collective matter, although a further approach views it as essentially a non-cognitive process. The advantage of viewing learning at as a collective issue is that the factors that inhibit or promote individual learning, such as structure, processes, culture and leadership, can be identified and addressed. Organisations that deliberately develop strategies to promote learning are sometimes referred to as 'learning organisations' and exhibit characteristics such as leaders who take risks and promote experimentation; participative policy making; decentralised decision taking; cross functional teams; promotion of inquiry and dialogue; culture of feedback and transparency; systems and structures to share learning; experiential learning; the employment of boundary spanners; and the promotion of inter-organisational learning.

6.173 Interesting contributions to the study of organisational learning draw a distinction between single loop and double loop learning (Argyris and Schon, 1978) and the interplay between tacit and explicit knowledge. Less knowledge and information is available on inter-organisational learning, although there is a view that situations that bring together separate communities with independent worldviews, such as Community Strategies, open up more opportunities for learning than those which produce unified organisational and individual identities. The focus of the work of Prahalad and Hamel (1990) around strategic learning based on the development of capabilities is worthy of note in this context, as are their concepts of core competency, strategic intent, and stretch and leverage. Core competency is seen as the direct outcome of collective learning requiring communication, involvement and a commitment to working across boundaries; strategic intent resonates with the use of visions to give unity and coherence to strategy; stretch refers to a mismatch between resources and ambition;

and leverage relates to methods of increasing a limited resource base through concentrating, accumulating, complementing, conserving or recovering resources.

Figure 21: Learning and Community Strategies

"The ability to network and learn from others is a strength"

"Usefulness of knowing what other people are doing"

"There has been a better interaction between partners involved in the process"

"It's about knowledge transfer - showing where things currently fit in so that we can better understand each other"

"There has not been a massive change since it was kick started a few years ago but understanding has developed"

"People's understanding of the community strategy has changed over time"

"We share each other's strategies and see that some underpin others"

"The community strategy has been a learning strategy"

"We learned from the community strategy when we looked at the HSCWB strategy"

"Success is getting people to meet and talk about shared agendas"

"Organisations learning about the community strategy are required to work in a new and different way and learn about the processes of other organisations"

(Source: Case Study Interviews)

6.174 Applied to community strategies, the learning model reflects its value as a strategic management exercise in terms of its potential to enhance the capacity of individuals and their organisations to share learning about the public management of complex social, economic and environmental problems (See Figure 21). This is realised through enhanced communication, networking, discussion, meetings and other forms of exchange between a variety of organisations across different sectors. Learning can be both formal and informal including secondments, joint training and other learning opportunities. Sharing notable practice about 'what works' in different organisations is an important element of this model. Arguably, because the implementation stage of many community strategies examined had not yet been reached, many people interviewed at national and local levels preferred to see their added value in terms of their improved awareness and learning particularly of each others' organisations and professions. The Community Strategy partnerships were often viewed as sites of learning by national and local stakeholders. However, the key issue is whether the learning model of strategic management is seen as a legitimate form of strategy, or merely a by product of a prescriptive approach based on design and planning. If it is the former, there are a number of implications for practice in terms of the actions and learning methodologies

that need to be promoted in order to realise an inter-organisational version of a 'learning organisation'. The Learning model is not without its difficulties many of which stem from there being no strategy as a result of incremental decision making and the absence of coherent purpose; a lost strategy or strategic drift because people are too busy learning; and the wrong strategy because emergent strategies may result in undesirable outcomes. The essential elements of a learning organisation can be seen by some as the antithesis of a formal, efficient, bureaucratic and hierarchical organisation, and there is an inevitable tension between learning and organising.

Recommendation 29:
Continuous Learning (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Strategies should be devised to promote individual and collective learning within an inter-organisational environment.

Model 6   The Public Relations Model

6.175 The Public Relations model essentially views the production of a Community Strategy as largely fulfilling a public relations function. It does articulate a vision, expresses various needs and aspirations, makes reference to various other strategies and partnerships and indicates some planned activities or intentions of the Council and its partners, but is not likely to contribute significantly to realising the Strategy.

6.176 Arguably, it may serve the purpose of signalling certain aspects of approaches to local governance such as partnership working and horizontal thinking, or provide a backcloth to particular funding applications. However, in the main it is largely cosmetic, adds little value and in the frank opinions of a number of interviewees: *"is only a presentation document".*

Chapter 7   Conclusion

Introduction

7.1   This evaluation has been undertaken at a point relatively a short way into the strategy process. In the main, it has only been possible to interrogate the formulation of the strategies and the processes that have been undertaken to realise them particularly through partnership working and citizen engagement. It is too early to make any definitive judgment about impacts and outcomes as the challenges of implementation, in all but a few cases, are only now being addressed. However, we have collected a diverse body of evidence that enables certain conclusions to be drawn about the prospects for successful implementation and whether community strategies are likely to make a real difference to the shape of policy design and delivery in Wales.

Lessons for Practice

7.2   The preceding discussion of community strategies has been framed around the dominant models that underpin practice across Wales. Although they are presented as separate models, there is considerable interplay between them, and in many areas, a number of the different models are being pursued at the same time. Clearly, this adds to the overall complexity of the exercise. On the basis of the early evidence of the community strategy process collected in the course of this research, a number of key messages emerge which are likely to be important in the future development of this public policy intervention. These are summarised under the headings of strategic management and the policy process, implementation and performance, working in partnership and engaging communities, community strategies as multi-level governance and organisational learning and capacity building.

Strategic Management and the Policy Process

7.3   Community strategies are, at their root, complex exercises in strategic management that demand high quality strategic management knowledge and competence. The extent to which this is available to community strategy practice in Wales is open to question. An interrogation of the community strategies confirms that there is overwhelmingly one model of strategic management that dominates thinking in this area, and it is not clear whether this has been the result of a conscious decision or a process of deliberation over alternative methodologies. There is more of a suggestion that this is a result of default rather design.

7.4   The dominant approach fits the planning model of strategic management as defined by Mintzberg et al (1998) in their categorisation of schools of thought. This model sees strategy formation as a deliberate and formal process of conception in which implementation follows only when strategies have been formulated - strategy is viewed as a grand conception. Key features of this model include:

- Objective setting.
- External audit including forecasting.
- Internal audit to check capabilities.
- Operationalisation that is the subject of a decomposition of a strategy into hierarchies of sub-strategies and plans at different levels, and over different timescales.
- Where the stated purpose is planning but the intention is control through budgets, objectives, operating plans and action programmes overlaid on some individual or division of an organisation or organisations.

7.5   This model has attracted numerous criticisms (Clegg et al, 2004) which centre on its over-formulisation which removes thinking and comprehension and ignores emergence and learning; its predetermination which questions an organisation's ability to predict/control the course of its environment; its separation between formulation and implementation and the implicit detachment of thinking from action creating tensions between formulators of strategy and the implementers.

7.6   On this final issue, there was a strong perception by many stakeholders interviewed in the research that community strategies are essentially the responsibility of the corporate centres of the organisation where 'strategy' is considered to be undertaken, and that service departments are essentially primarily concerned with delivery of policy. This artificial separation of policy formulation and implementation (either real or perceived) is often the root cause of implementation deficits or policy evaporation. This sense of separation is sometimes exacerbated by perceived power differentials and imbalances between strategy makers and service practitioners; although the reality may be that the power of control over resource priorities and allocations lies in service departments and with professional groups.

7.7   There is little doubt that many community strategy partnerships are struggling with the tensions and problems implicit in the planning model of strategic management. It is self-evident that that a much greater appreciation of the merits of alternative approaches need to be encouraged. The entrepreneurial school with its focus on strategic visions and strong associations with leaders may be appropriate in some areas; the learning school with its emphasis on strategy as an emergent process where formulation and implementation become indistinguishable, and where the responsibility for strategy is dispersed through an organisation, certainly has many merits; the cultural school offers an important perspective in community strategies because it is aimed at managing a process of change that promotes many new values and goals in the public sector, including the design of citizen centred services and working across conventional boundaries; and finally the power school offers interesting insights into the overall process as it alights on the political nature of strategic management at both micro and macro levels. Macro power manoeuvring sees organisations promoting their own interests through controlling or cooperating with other organisations through collective strategies such as community strategies as well as various kinds of networks and alliances.

7.8   The key message here is that there are a number of different approaches to strategic management. Currently, community strategies are based on planning and

design models which have a number of inherent fallacies. Alternative models have the potential for making an important and potentially more effective contribution and need to be explored.

Implementation and Performance

7.9   The timing of this research study was such that little practical experience was available on matters of implementation and performance. The majority of community strategies were at the stage of design, although, through interviews and examination of documentary evidence, we are able to offer a number of comments on the key challenges and likely effectiveness of approaches to these tasks. The first point to make is that the policy process should not be seen as a series of separate and linear stages - design, delivery and evaluation. They are intimately interlinked, and certainly a number of community strategies are now faced with a number of dilemmas because, at the design stage, they have not properly considered issues of implementation and performance. A second point to emphasise is that the implementation and performance measurement challenges are very much conditional on main purpose or purposes that underpin the design and delivery of the community strategies. Therefore, the importance of seeking clarity of purpose and the underpinning model of change is fundamental.

Rational Planning: Co-ordination and Integration

7.10   The implementation challenge of this approach rests on an ability to make the strategic planning model work in practice. The majority of community strategies are constructed around this model, but it is too early to reach any conclusions as to their effectiveness. However, some of the difficulties indicated above, of delivering policy in this mode, have already surfaced. The key challenges involve the following:

- Being able to specify a clear, stable, non-contradictory and consistent set of strategic goals that is capable of setting the direction for a wide range of social, economic and environmental policy areas.
- Being able to construct an outcome focused performance framework that is capable of providing an assessment as to the extent to which these strategic goals have been realised.
- Being able to build an inter-organisational structure that is capable of delivering the strategy. This involves the design of a coherent framework of strategies, sub-strategies and operating plans. The Assembly's plan rationalisation proposals should assist with this task, although much will still depend on a local authority's competence to devise effective local solutions.
- Being able to negotiate decision making processes and associated accountability frameworks that offer real life meaning to strategic intentions. In particular, this involves clarity and co-ordination around roles and responsibilities.
- Being able to instigate effective cross cutting frameworks to promote horizontal integration.
- Being able to influence and guide resource allocation and budgetary processes.

7.11   The enormity of these challenges cannot be underestimated. Any failure to undertake these effectively will result in the strategic planning approach becoming an expensive distraction from the realities of organisational life.

Working in Partnership and Engaging with the Public

7.12   Working in partnership is considered to be the dominant mode of organising for community strategies. This imperative can be seen to apply at different levels of governance, policy areas, sectors, and with citizens and communities. However, the nature and extent of co-operative behaviour is highly contested and different models exist. Working in partnership can mean sharing information and learning together, but it can also mean joint commissioning and integrated provision. The two models may be sympathetic in principle but are fundamentally different in substance and practice.

7.13   Community Strategy Partnerships are the central organising and co-ordinating structure for the overall project, and their robustness and effectiveness are critical success factors. This research study has examined the effectiveness of the partnerships so far and raised a number of issues concerning their future fitness for purpose. In our opinion, Community Strategy Partnerships need to reflect on their appropriateness in terms of a number of key factors as follows:

- The role, function and purpose of the partnerships: these are the key questions that determine the composition and business of the partnership. The resulting structure will follow from whether they are seen as advisory, consultative, co-ordinating, scrutinising or executive.
- Representation: the issues here relate to the optimum size of the group and resolving the tension between manageability and inclusiveness. It will depend on the role of the group, and the choice of individual representatives needs to take account of experience, knowledge, expertise and organisational status, as well as availability, legitimacy and nature of mandate from the host organisation. The continued appropriateness of the make-up of a community strategy partnership needs to be the subject of regular review to ensure that the 'right people are at the table' and to avoid problems of 'groupthink'.
- Leadership: this is a critical issue and concerns both the appropriateness of the formal leaders of the partnership, the styles of leadership they promote and the extent to which this function is dispersed or shared throughout the theatres of partnership. The notion of community leadership is important in this context and striking a balance between providing strategic direction and empowering others requires careful judgement.
- Organisation: the issues under this heading relate to frequency and style of meetings; agenda setting and forward planning; monitoring progress and actionning decisions. It also concerns more fundamental matters relating to internal and external communication, marketing and profile.
- Resourcing and servicing: partnership working is highly demanding in terms of servicing the process and structures. Are dedicated staff and/or other resources available to maintain this process, and is this shared equally amongst partnering organisations? Is there capacity for task and finish groups?
- Accountability and governance: typically these are often ill-defined and unclear in many partnerships. This invariably stems from the lack of clarity of purpose making it difficult to hold people and organisations to account for their actions. Frameworks for both individual and collective accountability need to be established. Careful balances need to be made between the degree of formalisation through protocols, compacts and other mechanism, and more flexible arrangements based on trusting relationships which can be seen to underpin this network mode of managing.

- Individual and group development: working in partnership is materially different from working in single organisations, and requires particular skills, competencies and capabilities. Is there a strategy within each community strategy partnership to ensure that individual and group capacities are developed? Are adequate resources available?
- Performance: community strategy partnerships epitomise a particular way of working that seeks to build trust, develop co-operative behaviours and build inter-organisational capabilities. It is important that process outcomes are also the subject of regular review as well as changes to the quality of life.

7.14 The theme of partnership is embraced by a philosophy in Wales, set out in the Making the Connections agenda, of engaging with citizens and communities in the design and delivery of public services. This cause has been embraced by all community strategy partnerships in the preparation of their first strategies with varying degrees of effectiveness as described earlier in the report. The key messages to emerge from this analysis are as follows:

- In order to engage with as wide a cross section of the local population as possible, a plurality of methodologies need to be devised. These should reflect people as citizens in area based and interest based communities, and people as clients and users of public services.
- Public engagement techniques need to be more creative and innovative in design and delivery, particularly to counter the negative stereotyping of political processes and the ineffectiveness of many traditional methods. This is particularly important in relation to groups of the population who for numerous reasons are less able or inclined to engage with public decision making.
- There needs to be greater effort to secure a better understanding of, and integration between, representative systems of democracy and participatory methodologies which are often promoted under the umbrella of community strategies. Currently, there is considerable confusion on these matters both by elected politicians and the public.
- Public engagement must be seen as a seamless rather than discrete process; it needs to be continuous, co-ordinated and above all transparent. Many community strategy partnerships face a great deal of work on these areas.
- Community engagement is resource intensive - the process is inevitably elongated and requires co-ordination and support. It is premised on a capacity to engage meaningfully and equally and, therefore, capacity building programmes are necessary.

Managing Performance and Outcomes

7.15 The major challenge of measuring the extent to which the objectives and purposes of a community strategy have been achieved can be tackled over two timescales. Firstly, they are conceived as long-term (10-15 years) directions for the social, economic and environmental development of local communities. Measuring success focuses on changes to the quality of life of individuals and communities over time. It relates to the achievement of strategic outcomes, such as reducing poverty, lessening health inequalities, expanding lifelong learning, and reducing the ecological footprint of the community on its environment. The work around quality of life measurements using baskets of indicators to track

changes over time lends itself to this kind of assessment. As has been indicated earlier in the report, this is not an exact science and there are many conceptual, technical and practical problems associated with these forms of measurement - not the least being causal attribution. Can you unambiguously measure the contribution of community strategy interventions as against other influences and factors both planned and unintended? If community strategy partnerships decide to go down this path, it does require a disciplined approach to the production of clear strategic priorities and associated strategic outcomes. Also, it encourages organisations to develop appropriate shared outcome measures to reflect the interdependency between the actions of different agencies.

Figure 22: Approaches to Performance Management

Model	Performance Management Approach
Rational Planning	This is primarily demonstrated through sub-strategies and their associated plans particularly for each of the main policy areas; incorporation into Wales Programme for Improvement frameworks of local authorities; balanced scorecards.
Civic Renewal	Measures of the health of representative and participatory government - electoral turnouts, hard to reach groups, innovation, inclusivity, increased trust and participation in civil society.
Network Governance	Partnership health checks measuring the robustness and appropriateness of this mode of working using process outcomes such as trust, inclusivity and capacity building.
Multi-Level Governance	This form of governance seeks to promote coherence and co-ordination across and within different levels. Policy agreements and national government performance indicators fall into this category.
Learning	Individual; organisational and inter-organisational; measuring the learning organisation.

7.16   Secondly, community strategies are seen as practical vehicles for setting out and delivering programmes, actions and policies which contribute to the overall strategic direction of the longer term strategy. The statutory guidance considers that short term action plans provide this function. These offer the prospect of more detailed performance management activities, which can be linked to mainstream performance management regimes such as Wales Programme for Improvement and Policy Agreements. Our view is that the type of performance management undertaken depends on the model of change adopted for the community strategy. Methodologies to gauge the success of improved public engagement strategies are different from those that are designed to promote co-ordination between services in related policy areas. Figure 22 illustrates some of the key issues and approaches that are relevant to different models of community strategies.

Community Strategies as Multi-Level Governance

7.17   One dominant model of change to emerge from this evaluation focuses on community strategies as frameworks or mechanisms for promoting multi-level governance. This concerns efforts to secure co-ordination across organisational boundaries - functional, spatial and sectoral (public, private, voluntary) without removing them, although some solutions may involve re-structuring or reconfiguration. The key tasks are directed towards aligning the disparate cultures, aims, responsibilities, management systems and planning frameworks of many organisations towards shared and negotiated public goals. The aim is to deliver policies, programmes and other policy interventions that are coherent, integrated and complementary - to be efficient in the use of limited resources and to be effective in meeting citizen centred needs.

Figure 23: The Dimensions of Multi-Level Governance for Community Strategies

Dimensions	Existing Frameworks
Legislative	Statutory duty on local authorities; statutory guidance; power of 'well being'.
Policy Frameworks and Instruments	Making the Connections; Wales Spatial Plan; Plan Rationalisation; Policy Integration Tool.
Learning and Skills - leadership; partnership skills; learning organisations; collaborative cultures	Public Service Management Wales.
Inter-Organisational: Partnerships, Networks and Alliances	Community Planning Officer's Network; Community Strategy Working Group.
Performance and Accountability	Policy Agreements; Wales Programme for Improvement; National Performance Indicators.
Financial	None.

7.18   Figure 23 highlights the existing framework for managing community strategies across different levels of governance. Currently, the main interface is between local and national government, although the discussion in the last chapter referred to other significant levels - regional, UK and Community and Town Councils. The extent to which the current arrangements are fit for purpose can be considered by testing them against a template containing a number of general principles for effective multi-level governance:

* Openness and transparency: do decision making processes promote trust? Is there open and effective communication between levels based on common language and shared understandings of community strategy purposes?
* Leadership and commitment: is there high level political and executive leadership for community strategies? Is the style of leadership appropriate for community strategies? Are there strategies for joint accountabilities between organisations at different levels?

- Participation and stakeholder involvement: throughout the policy chain: are multiple stakeholder groups involved effectively at the design, delivery and evaluation stages of policy?
- Effective: are the governance structures effective in delivering policy and programmes? Is this evidence-based?
- Clarity of competence: do organisations and partnerships at all levels clearly understand what is within and beyond their remit, and the areas of activity that can be undertaken alone and those that require interaction with others across different tiers of governance?
- Coherent: are policies, strategies and programmes coherent, co-ordinated or integrated across multiple boundaries of space, sector and policy area? What mechanisms are in place to promote coherence? Are these based on exhortation or compliance?
- Specific institutional mechanisms to steer integration: what organisational structures are in place specifically to co-ordinate or integrate community strategies across different levels of governance?
- Efficient knowledge management and learning: what strategies exist to promote inter-organisational learning, partnership skills development and organisational capacities? How is knowledge created and transferred/shared between people and organisations?

7.19   The discussion in the last chapter suggests that the existing system falls short on a number of these principles and that specific action is needed to build a more effective framework for multi-level governance.

Organisational Learning and Capacity Building

7.20   One of the early positive messages to emerge from this evaluation was the view expressed by a number of respondents involved in the local community strategy partnerships that they, as individuals, had learnt about other organisations - their cultures, ways of working, limitations, operating systems, performance frameworks and aspirations. This was often considered to be an investment that, even though it had not yet been realised, would bear fruits in the future. The question for local partnerships is the extent to which this phenomenon which underpins the learning model of strategic management should be encouraged and supported, and furthermore, the extent to which it should be planned or allowed to flourish unconstrained. The growing interest in a number of community strategy partnerships in the potential for projects as exemplars can be seen both as a lack of confidence in the strategic planning model in being able to deliver systemic change, but also as an example of the bottom up or emergent nature of strategy development espoused by the learning model.

7.21   Learning can be promoted at an individual or collective level (organisational and inter-organisational); leadership in this mode has to be of a particular type (see below); and the notion of the 'learning organisation' represents the fullest expression of this approach. It appears to be tailor made for partnership arenas because it rejects the axioms of the traditional bureaucratic organisation; it is decentralised, encourages open communication and networking; and promotes team work. Collaboration replaces hierarchy and the cultural determinants are based on openness, honesty and trust. The whole project is designed to build

appropriate competencies and capabilities within organisations to enable them to deal flexibly with the future.

7.22 Community strategy partnerships can usefully explore the extent to which they are able to build the inter-organisational equivalent of a 'learning organisation'. There is already some evidence of this within the system - networks of practitioners, secondments, sharing information, cross functional teams and partnership co-ordinators. These building blocks can be enhanced through more coherent and comprehensive strategies to enhance learning in support of more effective community strategy practice.

Leadership for Community Strategies

7.23 Leadership is a critical factor in the evolution of community strategies. Not only is it of great importance in its own right, but it is intimately linked to other key elements of the community strategy process such as structure, people, power, culture, strategy, change and learning. However, the literature on leadership is both extensive and highly contested, and from a practitioner's viewpoint there are conflicting messages about the right styles and approaches that should be used in different circumstances, or indeed, whether leadership has any impact on organisational outcomes. The situation is further confused by debates around the distinction between leadership and management. Perspectives on leadership often converge with debates around highly interrelated factors such as structure, people, culture, learning and strategy.

7.24 In relation to structure, the key question here is whether leadership styles need to vary according to organisational form. Traditional organisational structures tend to be based on differentiation, functionalism and control, whereas new organisational structures such as partnerships and alliances celebrate difference and collaboration. The later form is often associated with more dispersed forms of leadership which seek to empower people at all different levels in an organisation. It is also aimed at engendering a greater appetite for creativity and risk taking within an organisation, and can be evidenced in the growth of cross functional and cross organisational groups. Although it is easy to be seduced by this style in the context of community strategies, it is important to sound a note of caution (Hardy and Palmer, 2000) and counsel that traditional leadership styles might still be appropriate for particular tasks and projects. In particular, strategy formation may be a highly appropriate context for dispersed styles of leadership, whereas more directive styles might ensure that the task of implementation is talked efficiently. Lastly, although dispersed styles of leadership may be encouraged in particular circumstances, the underlying structures of power relationships within and between organisations conspire to make this impossible.

7.25 Another perspective on leadership suggests that the role of leaders is to influence the way others behave in an organisation. This is achieved either through adopting particular styles appropriate to the needs of a particular situation or by virtue of charisma. Typical leadership styles are authoritarian, transactional, transformational and empowering, some of which can be related to personal traits of the leaders. Alternatively, contingency approaches suggest that leaders need to link their approach to the particular needs of the situation.

The charismatic leader is essentially transformational and influences through the force of personality and the ability to communicate meaning and vision. One is led to pose the question as to whether community strategies and community leadership needs charismatic leaders, and if so, where this might come from?

7.26   The nature of leadership is likely to be contingent on the approach adopted to strategic management. The leadership challenge of design and planning models rests with the people at the top of the organisation - control and consciousness lies at this level. Conversely, in the learning school where strategy is viewed as a crafted and emergent process, the leadership imperatives centre more on creating an environment in which learning can flourish. Bolman and Deal's (2003) work that links leadership styles to dominant organisational frames serves to highlight the variation of approaches to leadership. For example, framing the role of organisations in structural terms emphasises the analytical and design elements of leadership processes, whereas seeing organisations more in terms of human resources should result in leadership that involves support and empowerment strategies. Finally, Hambleton et al (2001) arrive at a three-fold typology of leadership styles from their research on partnerships - designed and focused, implied and fragmented, and emergent and formative. They argue that these styles are influenced primarily by the policy environment, the partnership arrangements, personal characteristics and relationships. In terms of personal characteristics, the research findings suggest that leadership in partnership settings is most effective when it is clear, accountable and pragmatic based on brokering and negotiation. Conversely, it is least effective when it is opaque and precarious, and particularly strong leadership is perceived to be inimical to joint working because leaders are suspected of taking over. This was exemplified by one interviewee in the evaluation in his assessment of one leader: *"he was perceived to be a powerful, strong leader rather than a facilitator which was a contentious issue".*

7.27   There is not a single clear message for effective leadership within frameworks such as community strategies. Perhaps the answer is that there should not be a dominant style or approach but ones that are matched to particular tasks and functions.

Adding Value

7.28   Our view is that the design and delivery of effective community strategies represents one of the most complex strategic management challenges facing local authorities. It encapsulates under one umbrella many of the expectations of modern local governance including community leadership, integrated policy making, working in partnership and engaging with citizens and communities. In addition to this complexity is the task of working within longer-term planning frameworks. This is not easy in an environment still predominantly focused around annual budgeting cycles and often rapidly changing political priorities. Indeed, the vagaries of the political process can have a significant influence on the direction and commitment of community strategies between different administrations as evidenced in a number of areas examined in this study, potentially undermining a previous investment in building partnership capacity and citizen involvement.

7.29 The extent to which there is effective political and executive leadership for community strategy processes at all levels of governance throughout Wales is questionable. There certainly is a case for increased efforts to be invested in broadening the political involvement in local strategic partnerships and their programme of activities, and connecting them with the real decision making arenas. The demands of a highly complex strategic management challenge need to be matched by the availability of appropriate human and organisational capacity. Currently, there is evidence to suggest that this is not sufficient in a number of areas in relation to leadership, expertise and skill and financial and management resources.

7.30 The breadth and multi-purpose nature of the community strategy agenda potentially conspires to make it difficult for it to add significant value in highly congested policy spaces. There are already many examples of partnership working and citizen engagement in different policy areas. The evidence of this research study is that these are the sites that are the primary focus of attention for particular policy communities and interests, and the community strategy has a lower profile and priority. In this context, the acid test for community strategies is how and where they can best make a unique contribution to local and national governance.

7.31 Our view is that determining this contribution will be aided by a much sharper focus on the purpose of community strategies. Also, it needs to reflect a view on the extent to which there is room for manoeuvre at a local level. A number of contributions to this research suggested that national priorities, resource allocation methods and Performance Management Frameworks severely limited the potential for public, private and voluntary actors to determine their own local solutions. The 'blandness' and similarity of a number of community strategies underscores this point. However, the potential for local strategic choice may well be more real and community strategies can be a key component of this (Audit Commission, 2005).

7.32 At this point in time, we are led to conclude that in general the preparation of community strategies has not yet made a significant impact on local and national governance. As the views captured in Figure 24 suggest, there is currently a substantial measure of scepticism about their added value.

Figure 24: The Added Value of Community Strategies

- "I can't say that it's made a difference to be honest; it certainly has not added value"; "it's not added anything to my daily work"; "our activities aren't really impacted by the community strategy"
- "I have not changed the way I do business as a result of the community strategy but perhaps it has raised awareness of other things that are occurring"
- "I'm not convinced that the community strategy actually helps deliver anything that would not be delivered anyway"
- "the community strategy has helped get people around the table which hasn't happened in the past"; "it is nice to get people talking to each other but not sure that having a community strategy advances things"

Figure 24: The Added Value of Community Strategies (continued)

- "has not yet reshaped priorities of partner organisations"
- "it is an amalgam of what happens at the moment, it doesn't add value"; "many are just a collation of other people's plans - very glossy documents which look good but don't make a difference"
- "my view is that most things would have happened irrespective of a community strategy - it can only affect change at the margins and it has not changed the way we operate but perhaps we are more aware of actions in other policy areas and organisations through networking and information exchange"
- "at the moment, the community plan does not have the gravitas or power behind it to enforce greater change"
- "For all the effort we put into the Community Strategy, I can't actually see what we get out of it. I think the partnership work would have happened anyway out of necessity"
- "Community strategies in general do not appear to be adding value; there is a lack of clarity of purpose; they are council-led and local partnerships are often "talking shops"; "there is not enough engagement across the council's staff and little knowledge outside"

Source: Case Studies, Network Meetings and Research Workshops

7.33   On a positive note, our feedback suggests that community strategy processes have heightened awareness of the connections between individual and organisational agencies particularly through increased networking, communication and information exchange. In addition, partnership structures have provided a forum for the pursuit of collective and co-operative strategies. One interpretation of this is that this is the first and necessary stage in a longer term project that may ultimately blossom into better co-ordination and even more sophisticated forms of collaboration. In this context, it may be rather misguided to adopt a formal and planned approach to strategic management, when a more entrepreneurial or learning approach is more appropriate.

7.34   The key issues that are considered to reduce the impact and effectiveness currently are considered to be:

- The low profile of community strategies within the basket of strategies and partnerships of local authorities and other public bodies, despite their overarching intent.
- The judgement that they have not yet significantly changed the way agencies do business, nor affected the resource allocation processes or priorities of public bodies.
- The view that many policy imperatives such as partnership working and community engagement would have happened without the stimulus of the community strategy.
- The sense that community strategy values and cultures are impacting only at the margins of organisations and are not penetrating into mainstream policy processes and structures.

- The Community Strategy Partnerships are primarily advisory and consultative and are not empowered to direct executive action.

7.35 Even amongst the community strategy officer community, initial assessments of value are guarded as indicated by a selection of comments made in interviews listed in Figure 25.

Figure 25: The Added Value of Community Strategies: A Community Strategy Officer Perspective

- "I think this is a theoretical added value to date; so far we have been basing our actions on existing plans and it is difficult to demonstrate the added value; we should persevere with it and the added value will emerge over time"
- "I think the value is working with the right partners and involving them in the plan. Hopefully, it will be the main reference point for all the other plans and strategies"
- "it adds the context of working in partnership with other people and it gives us the possibility of managing that in a much more strategic and correlated sense rather than an issue by issue basis; it also reinforces the Council's sense of purpose"
- "its led to a better understanding of needs and wants and of how other agencies work"
- "I think it is valuable in pulling all that partnership working together in one place; in doing that you can identify cross-over and you can identify gaps"
- "I think its added quite a lot of value; from the council point of view we have become much better at corporate issues with a clear corporate direction; it has also been useful on a PR front"

Source: Interviews with Community Strategy Officers

7.36 In the opinion of this community of practitioners, greater effectiveness should be sought through more statutory prescription on partner public bodies, the release of resources from central government to resource the process properly and increased guidance and support.

7.37 Although community strategy officers express reservations about the progress achieved so far, these are balanced by an optimism that the formulation of strategies was never likely to result in immediate changes, and that the full potential of most community strategies is yet to be realised. It is a longer term project and a process of evolution which will take time to deliver systemic change. The real value to date has been in the investment in social, organisational and partnership capacity which will provide the foundation for future action.

7.38 Whilst it is easy to sympathise with this viewpoint, this research has identified a number of areas where this investment is misguided and fragile. The true test of working in partnership remains to be seen in many areas, and many forces will reinforce the natural tendency towards organisational self-interests. Time is also not on the side of community strategies. Political judgements on their value will be taken sooner rather than later at

both national and local levels. If community strategies are to make a real contribution to local and national governance, and not be allowed to wither in the backwaters of public management, a far greater commitment and energy needs to be invested in the immediate future on implementation and delivery to demonstrate that they can become a permanent feature of the public policy landscape.

8. Recommendations

1. Welsh Community Planning Officer's Network

The Welsh Community Planning Officer's Network should consider widening its membership to include practitioners from a range of policy areas and agencies other than local government

2. Resources for Co-ordination (for local government and Community Strategy Partnerships)

We understand the arguments on both sides for resources to fund the costs of the co-ordination and servicing of community strategy processes. Our balanced view is that central government should not be expected to accompany every new initiative with extra resources. Community strategies are a legitimate responsibility of local government, the costs of which should be met via more effective and collaborative forms of working.

3. Revised Guidance (for Welsh Assembly Government)

There is a case for revising the statutory guidance to take account of the policy changes that have occurred since it was originally issued. However, we consider that this should avoid being overly prescriptive in form as no amount of central prescription will substitute for informed and talented local proponents of community strategy practice and management. However, whilst we do not recommend the creation of more prescriptive guidance, we do recommend the provision of more information providing examples and case studies of the community strategy process in action.

4. Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer (for Welsh Assembly Government and local government)

We believe that considerable investment is necessary in capacity building, network development, skills training and knowledge transfer around key elements of community strategies such as working in partnership, methods of citizen involvement and integrated policy making. This is best achieved in partnership between different levels of government and different sectors, and could attract specific funding from Welsh Assembly Government in the short term.

5. Statutory Duties (for Welsh Assembly Government)

Although there is a clear case for a greater commitment and involvement of different partners in the community strategy process, our view is that this is not necessarily achieved through an extension of statutory duties. The notion of community strategies lies squarely in the realms of a local authority community leadership role, and effective partnership working is more likely to be achieved by organisations motivated to participate through a recognition of collective interests and a commitment to citizen-centred services.

6. Clarity of purpose (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

This evaluation has highlighted the multi-purpose nature of community strategies. We do not presume to suggest which is right and which is wrong. However, we are strongly of the view that there needs to be a much sharper focus and negotiated consensus about purpose and role within the community strategy partnerships. Different purposes require different approaches to implementation and evaluation.

7. Integrated strategic management process (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

The process of strategic management must be integrated with robust implementation structures and outcome-focused frameworks built into the process at the design stages. Community strategy partnerships need to carefully review the merits of applying strategic planning models to community strategies. Alternative models of strategic management should be fully explored.

8. Visions (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Community strategy visions need to be unique, realistic and capable of being operationalised. They also need to reflect the agreed priorities of central and local government, but this is a difficult balance to achieve.

9. Strategic Priorities (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Community strategies need to provide a framework for strategic prioritisation to help re-shape or re-configure the resource allocation priorities of key public agencies towards a new consensus.

10. Co-ordination or Integration (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Although a number of examples of integrated service planning and delivery were noted during the course of this evaluation (albeit not part of the community planning process), it is perhaps an unrealistic aspiration to expect that community strategies can be the catalyst for this form of working across a wide swath of public services. Integrated services with perhaps pooled budgets and joint performance accountability frameworks are notoriously difficult to broker. In the near future, community strategies should realistically strive for better co-ordination of services and an identification of gaps in services rather than integration.

11. Using Exemplars (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

The movement in many community strategy partnerships towards the identification of a small number of action projects to act as exemplars of good practice is understandable given, firstly the difficulty of achieving whole-systems change, and secondly the desire to be associated with clearly attributable results from community strategy interventions. It represents a legitimate bottom up approach to policy change. However, in themselves, they are likely only to contribute on the margins unless the lessons from them are mainstreamed into

organisational budgets and priorities. For this to happen, the lessons from other policy initiatives suggest that the mechanisms to effect mainstreaming need to be considered at the outset.

12.   Horizontal Integration (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

It is in this area that community strategies can really stamp their mark, and techniques such as policy integration tools, meetings of co-ordinators, common membership on partnerships should be given attention here.

13.   Managing Cross Cutting Issues (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

The conversion of good intentions in relation to equality, the Welsh language and sustainable development into meaningful action requires a concerted effort to integrate cross cutting perspectives into the design, delivery and evaluation of community strategies. Although policy integration tools have a part to play they need to be accompanied by a range of other measures to be effective including training, awareness raising, facilitative leadership and commitment, changes to organisational cultures, the involvement of champions, evaluatory frameworks and adequate resourcing.

14.   Outcome-Focus (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

This approach to community strategies must be supported by outcome-focused frameworks to enable strategic level evaluation.

15.   Multiple identities (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Most community strategy partnerships have recognised that citizens present with a number of different identities which need to be addressed in different ways. Also the purposes of public involvement can be varied as can the degrees to which individuals are empowered through particular techniques. There certainly is a need for greater clarity around purpose, and a need to reflect on whether existing approaches offer the prospect of a co-evolution of solutions between people and public agencies.

16.   Innovations in practice (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Whilst there are examples of innovation and creativity in approaches to public engagement, traditional approaches dominated the development of many community strategies. Without championing the virtues of innovation for its own sake, more thought and experience needs to be brought to bear to introduce methodologies that can contribute to a more constructive dialogue between citizens and service providers.

17.   Capacity building and Resources (for Community Strategy Partnerships and Welsh Assembly Government)

People and communities need the skills and resources to enable them to converse on more equal terms with public servants and professionals.

This requires resources for capacity building programmes, community development approaches and people to facilitate the process.

18. Integrating participatory and representative approaches (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

The key challenge facing participatory approaches to public engagement encouraged through community strategies clearly rests in the receptiveness of the elected councillors to the challenge to their representative roles. It is highly unlikely that participatory models will replace representative structures or that participatory structures can exist in a vacuum. It is advisable that attempts should be made to dovetail the two and promote greater participatory democracy as a method of both improving the effectiveness of local councillors and enhancing local democracy. The success or otherwise of this is likely to unfold particularly in the context of local area committees and forums.

19. Engagement through the policy process (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Public involvement should not be viewed as a one-off event. Continuity and transparency are key components in a strategy making process that needs to devise appropriate opportunities to engage with people and communities on a continuous and open basis. Thought also needs to be given to co-ordinating engagement events irrespective of organisation or purpose. The new local development plan is an example of where public consultation needs to be integrated and co-ordinated.

20. Role and Purpose (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

The effectiveness of a number of community strategy partnerships is currently diminished by a lack of clarity around role and purpose. Whist a degree of ambiguity may have been acceptable around the design stage; delivery requires clear commitment on behalf of all partners. Hence, the extent to which the partnership influences, binds, commits or merely informs its constituents, are matters that need urgent resolution.

21. Community Leadership (for local government)

Community strategies provide the ideal vehicle for demonstrating a local council's community leadership role. This requires a measure of sensitivity to the roles, responsibilities and functions of other public agencies, private sector organisations and the voluntary sector. It demands a style of political and executive leadership that is facilitative and catalytic rather than directive, controlling and stifling. This has yet to be realised in some areas and could benefit from skilled support and development from key bodies such as the WLGA.

22. Accountability and Governance (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Following on from clarity around role, decisions have to be made about accountability and governance arrangements. They need to be tighter,

more transparent and related to suitable performance management frameworks. These should not attempt to duplicate the monitoring functions of other partnerships but be tailored to the projected outcomes of the community strategy.

23. Reviews (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Working in partnership is complex, demanding and dynamic. It requires constant reappraisal in view of changing circumstances, legislation and experience. Robust partnerships will need to have in place arrangements to regularly review their performance both in terms of substance and process.

24. Policy Integration at National Level (for Welsh Assembly Government)

There is evidence to suggest that major Assembly initiatives such as Communities First, Heath, Social Care and Well Being Strategies, Local Development Plans and Community Strategies are not as coherent and integrated as might be expected particularly by stakeholders who face the challenge of making the connections (or not) at local level. The proposal for plan rationalisation is a constructive step in the right direction. Whether the aim of a fully integrated policy system is attainable is open to question. Perhaps, in the shorter term more effective co-ordination between different policy streams would be a more realistic proposition.

25. Location of Function (for Welsh Assembly Government)

Consideration needs to be given to whether the Local Government Policy Division is the best location to discharge the community strategy function. Given the cross cutting nature of the agenda, a strong case can be made to locate it at the corporate centre.

26. National Outcome and Performance Management Frameworks (for Welsh Assembly Government, the WLGA and the WAO)

Welsh Assembly Government, the WLGA and the WAO can collectively assist the development of community strategies by helping to devise collaborative and consistent performance management frameworks which lean towards outcome measurements. The model of Local Area Agreements currently being piloted in England, and the recent experience of Local Public Service agreements in England, could be explored in this context.

27. Role of the WLGA (for the Welsh Local Government Association)

Given the importance of community strategies to the community leadership role of local authorities, the WLGA might consider ways in which it can enhance its role in terms of advice, guidance, support and training on aspects of community planning as part of an ongoing programme of work supporting the development of community leadership in Wales.

28. Regionalism (for Welsh Assembly Government and Local Government)

There is a powerful argument for considering public services at a level below national government and above that of local government. Many activities such as economic development, tourism and waste management do not respect local boundaries, and mechanisms are already in place to consider them at regional or sub-regional levels. The introduction of the 6 areas of the Wales Spatial Plan gives added prominence and impetus to this trend and one that community strategies ignore at their peril. If the spatial areas become frameworks for deliberating upon strategic priorities and resource allocation processes, community strategies risk being marginalised unless they are able to offer meaningful contribution. Clearer advice is necessary on this future relationship.

29. Continuous Learning (for Community Strategy Partnerships)

Strategies should be devised to promote individual and collective learning within an inter-organisational environment.

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Research Design and Methodology

A1.1   An effective approach to evaluation that is able to work with all of these elements to provide a coherent framework for evaluation and analysis is 'Theories of Change' developed by the Aspen Institute Round Table (1995). 'Theories of Change' (ToC) is a manifestation of an increasingly popular theory-driven approach used to evaluate complex public policy interventions because of its capacity to accommodate multi-sector activity, its explicit concern with the relationship between process and outcomes and its emphasis upon wholesale change at individual, organisational and system levels (Connell and Kubisch 1998).

A1.2   In recent years, policy evaluations in England have espoused a ToC approach, building on the work of the Aspen Round Table. Thus, evaluation of Health Action Zones (HAZ), of New Deal for Communities (NDC) and of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) have all begun to engage with a literature which has for many years been predominantly grounded in a north American context (Sullivan and Stewart, 2004). Below the key principles of ToC are briefly outlined and the implications for the evaluation of community strategies explored.

The Principles of Theories of Change

A1.3   A theory of change evaluation is: "a systematic and cumulative study of the links between activities, outcomes and contexts of the initiative" (Connell and Kubisch eds. 1998 pp15-44) or a theory of how and why an initiative works. It is a hybrid of process and outcomes analysis, which is used without a comparison group to explore behaviours and outcomes that are not easily measurable. It requires an articulation of short and long term goals and assumptions about what types of interventions lead to specified consequences that result in the desired short and long term goals. Central to a ToC evaluation is the requirement that the evaluator 'surface' the implicit theory of action inherent in a proposed intervention in order to delineate what should happen if the theory is correct and to identify short, medium and long term indicators of changes which can provide evidence on which to base evaluative judgements. For this process to be sufficiently robust a number of principles must be adhered to:

- The development of the ToC must involve all of the relevant stakeholders, i.e. from policy development to implementation, from providers to intended beneficiaries.
- To achieve desired change, stakeholders must be clear about the outcomes that are sought and the appropriateness of the interventions designed to achieve those outcomes in the prevailing context. Consequently, proposed interventions to achieve desired outcomes must be supported by evidence in relation to: the need for the interventions, the pertinence of the chosen interventions above others and the intended consequences of the interventions in terms of short, medium and long term goals. This helps to elaborate the nature of the data needed to support evaluation and it also helps to demonstrate the linkages between action and outcomes so providing a means of addressing the 'attribution dilemma' associated with evaluating complex initiatives.

- The ToC must be able to delineate change at all relevant levels from micro to strategic and should also be able to identify how change at one level informs change at another.

A1.4 The quality of the resulting ToC employed can be assessed against the following criteria:

- How plausible it is: the extent to which stakeholders are convinced of the logic of the theory.
- How doable it is: the degree to which necessary resources are available to deliver the necessary interventions.
- How testable it is: how far it is possible to collect evidence that will demonstrate the validity of the theory.
- How meaningful it is: the importance attached to the outcomes by stakeholders and their consequent preparedness to make the necessary changes to achieve them (Judge et al 2000).

Implementing a Theories of Change Approach

A1.5 Conventionally a ToC approach begins by examining the needs and resources of a local community, identifying long term goals that will meet these needs, specifying a range of interventions (activities, processes, projects) that will lead to these goals, articulating the rationale for each of these interventions and then prospectively specifying short, medium and long term milestones on the way to goal achievement (Figure 26). The relationship between the stages of the ToC is a dynamic one as expectations about the achievement of outcomes may change in view of available resources and the ToC itself may be modified over time following initial implementation. Supporters of the ToC approach argue that it has a number of benefits. The ToC emphasis on the prospective specification of goals, targets and activities is argued to facilitate measurement and data collection by clearly indicating which elements are important for the evaluation, thereby also enabling the targeting of scarce evaluation resources.

Figure 26: Schema of Theories of Change
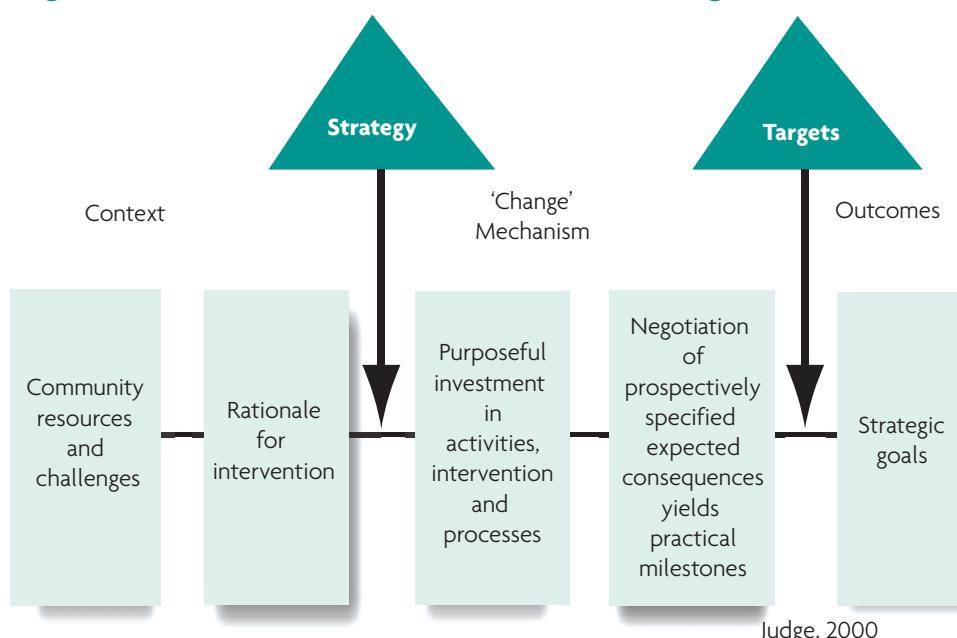
Judge, 2000

A1.6 The ToC focus on context supports stakeholder learning about what works in what circumstances so producing more useful policy learning and the close involvement of stakeholders in the processes of prospective specification reduces problems of attribution so facilitating greater confidence in the subsequent evaluation findings.

Theories of Change and Community Strategies

A1.7 There are two ways in which ToC can be used: (a) as a detailed, comprehensive theoretical and methodological model that determines all aspects of the evaluation, or (b) as a general overarching framework that provides direction and guidance to the evaluation. We are proposing the latter use of ToC for the following reasons. Firstly, community strategies are already established in most Welsh authorities, and so it would not be possible to use the ToC in a formative way as outlined above. Secondly, applying ToC as outlined by the Aspen Roundtable is very resource intensive and beyond the scope of this evaluation. Lastly, there are problems that result from the relatively short amount of time available for this research project.

Guiding the Investigation

A1.8 Here the ToC approach can be used to shape data collection by focusing attention on collecting data in relation to the following themes:

- The context within which community strategies are developed (e.g. socio-economic, political, history of collaboration, experience of 'joined-up' activity from strategic to neighbourhood/village levels)
- The processes by which priorities and key goals are determined (e.g. 'top down' or 'bottom up', breadth and depth of engagement across sectors)
- The resources that are available to localities to work towards these priorities and goals (e.g. mainstream versus additional monies)
- The key programmes and interventions that are specified as contributing to these priorities and goals and how they are to be delivered (e.g. role of partnership or joint action to deliver)
- The rationales that stakeholders put forward for the prioritisation of key programmes and interventions to achieve these priorities and goals (i.e. why and how the proposed activities will work)
- The ways in which localities can delineate short, medium and long term milestones to measure the achievement of their goals (e.g. performance monitoring)

A1.9 These themes can be explored in different levels of detail. For example a documentary analysis of all community strategies would provide data pertaining to each of these themes as all those involved in developing the community strategy agreed it. The identification of different perspectives on these themes as well as the uncovering of differences amongst stakeholders (different 'Theories of Change') would be revealed by more intensive investigation of stakeholder perspectives through case studies and workshops. In addition the ToC for the community strategies initiative in Wales (the ToC for the policy as opposed to the local practice) could be elaborated via individual interviews with a range of stakeholders involved at national level.

Supporting the Analysis

A1.10 ToC can help to support the analysis of data that is collected in the evaluation by focusing attention on the four key questions identified earlier:

- How plausible is the ToC underlying the community strategy? Here the evaluation will examine the extent to which it is possible to discern ToCs in relation to community strategies and how far local and national stakeholders are convinced of the logic of the theories that emerge.
- How doable is the ToC of the community strategy? Here the evaluation will examine the extent to which local stakeholders are able to identify and attract the necessary resources to deliver the programmes/interventions identified in their community strategies.
- How testable is the ToC of the community strategy? Here the evaluation will explore the ways in which the achievement of community strategy goals are measurable and linked to performance indicators that are being/can be collected and monitored.
- How meaningful is the ToC of the community strategy? Here the evaluation will draw on the data to assess the importance different stakeholders attach to the goals and outcomes outlined in the community strategies (e.g. in comparison to their service strategies) and the evidence they present of making organisational and other changes (e.g. development of new partnership initiatives) to achieve them.

ToC is an approach to evaluation not a method of evaluating.

Research Design

A1.11 The delivery of the research objectives was achieved through a multi-method approach consisting of a number of separate but interrelated components as follows:

1. Individual Community Strategies

A1.12 An interrogation and analysis of each community strategy and associated action plans was undertaken using a rapid appraisal technique. The assessment was guided by the template and guidance issued by the Assembly (National Assembly for Wales, 2001).

A1.13 Telephone interviews (of about one hour in duration) were conducted with the Community Strategy Manager/Co-ordinator for each local authority. This occurred after a preliminary assessment of each strategy in order to clarify, explore and analyse aspects of the community planning process, the thinking behind the strategy preparation, and the mechanisms that had been installed for implementation and monitoring. The telephone interviews were also used to inform the design of the national Workshops in terms of relevant key topics and issues faced by service managers and practitioners.

2. Case Studies

A1.14 3 case studies were undertaken in order to extract the depth and quality of insights necessary to inform the evaluation. They provided settings in which to undertake a whole-systems analysis of the interplay and management of a

range of factors, influences, actors, frameworks and processes. The selection of the case studies was based on the need to include both North and South Wales, authorities with different political administrations, and examples of a rural area, a concentrated urban area and a dispersed urban area. The final selection was made in consultation with the Project Reference Group and was Denbighshire, Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taff.

A1.15 In Denbighshire, evidence was assembled from a number of different sources as follows:

- An interrogation of documentary evidence including reports, papers and material directly related to the preparation of the community strategy and the Community Strategy Partnership Board. This was supplemented by an appraisal of a number of complementary strategies relating to crime and community safety, health, social care and well being, economic regeneration, equality and children and young people.
- A partnership health check questionnaire to members of the Denbighshire Community Strategy Partnership. The questionnaire was used to collect the views and opinions on the need for working in partnership, clarity and realism of aims and purpose, degree of commitment and ownership, communication and trust, the robustness of partnership arrangements, inclusivity and other matters of process. Opinions were also sought on what had worked well, what had been less effective and what needed to be done in the future, particularly on aspects of implementation and evaluation.
- 17 in-depth interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders both within the Council and in the wider community strategy partnership. The choice of interviewees reflected a diagonal slice through the inter-organisational domain and included top-level managers in partner organisations, service managers and practitioners, politicians and community representatives, and people from different policy areas.

Organisation	Role
Denbighshire County Council	Strategic Policy Officer
Denbighshire County Council	Corporate Director for Health and Social Care
Denbighshire County Council	Head of Planning and Public Protection
Denbighshire County Council	Principal Regeneration Officer
Denbighshire County Council	Head of Finance and Performance (Environment)
Denbighshire County Council	Leader
Denbighshire County Council	Education Officer
Denbighshire County Council	Head of Housing Services
Denbighshire County Council	Principal Policy Officer (Social Strategies)
Denbighshire County Council	Strategic Policy Officer
Denbighshire County Council	Equalities Officer
Denbighshire County Council	Lead Cabinet Member
DCC/Local Heath Board	Joint Flexibilities Manager
Local Health Board	Chief Executive
Forestry Commission	Manager
Welsh Development Agency	Area Manager

- The interviews were conducted on a face to face basis and usually took about one hour. The topics covered included a reflection on the effectiveness of approaches adopted to prepare a community strategy; the model of partnership adopted and the processes involved to ensure a diverse and equal representation; views on the content and substance of the strategies; the methods proposed to deliver the aims of the strategy including mainstreaming, integration and special policies and programmes; the steps that have been taken for monitoring, review and evaluation including an ability to assess performance on any cross cutting themes such as equality, social inclusion and sustainable development; and any training and capacity building programmes that have been instituted to accompany the community planning process.
- A focus group discussion was undertaken with the Community Strategy partnership to discuss the preliminary findings of the local evaluation, and to enable the group to determine how best to take forward its partnership arrangements and approach to the community strategy. This was attended by 16 representatives over a 3 hour period.

A1.16 In Cardiff, evidence was assembled from a similar range of methods, and the individual interviewees were as follows:

Organisation	Role
Cardiff City Council	Deputy Chief Executive
Cardiff City Council	Group Leader of Neighbourhood Planning
Cardiff City Council	Housing Strategy and Development Manager
Cardiff City Council	Principal Officer, Community Safety
Cardiff City Council	Health Strategy Manager
Cardiff City Council	Children and Young People's Partnership Manager
Cardiff City Council	Sustainable Development Co-ordinator
Cardiff City Council	Corporate Director
Cardiff City Council	Head of Policy and Economic Development
Cardiff City Council	Operational Manager, Social Services
Environment Agency	District Manager
Church	Vicar
ELWa	Network Development Manager
Cardiff College of Music	Principal
South Wales Police	Superintendent
Cardiff and the Vale Probation Service	District Manager
Cardiff Housing Association	Chief Executive
Cardiff Voluntary Council	Manager
Job Centre Plus	District Manager
Cardiff and the Vale NHS Trust	Head of Planning

A1.17 In Rhondda Cynon Taff, evidence was collected from documentary material and a partnership health check questionnaire. Stakeholder interviews

were undertaken with a selection of Council officers together with a number of members of the Local Strategic Partnership - the Better Life Consortium.

Organisation	Role
RCT Borough Council	Head of Regeneration and Communities
RCT Borough Council	Director of Continuous Improvement
RCT Borough Council	Director of Lifelong Learning
RCT Borough Council	Director of Environmental Services
RCT Borough Council	Chief Executive
RCT Borough Council	Divisional Director of Children and Young People
RCT Borough Council	Assistant Director Community Care
RCT Borough Council	Head of Communications and Marketing
Chamber of Commerce	Manager
Local Health Board	Head of Health Promotion
Groundwork	Project Manager
South Wales Police	Superintendent and Community Safety Manager

A1.18 A focus group (consisting of 15 people) was also undertaken with a wide range of voluntary sector representatives operating in the RCT area and convened under the umbrella of the local Council for Voluntary Action -Interlink. They included a regeneration partnership, age concern, communities first, crime prevention, Barnardos, arts factory, valleys kids, ramblers, youth and community project, and interlink

3. Stakeholder Interviews

A1.19 The views and opinions of a selection of key national stakeholders were collected from a series of in-depth and face-to-face interviews.

Organisation	Interviewee
Welsh Assembly Government	Mathew Quinn, Strategic Policy Unit
Welsh Assembly Government	Kate Cassidy, Local Government Modernisation Unit
Welsh Assembly Government	Hugh Garner, Health and Social Care Division
Welsh Assembly Government	Lesley Punter, Environment Division
Welsh Assembly Government	Gareth Thomas, Communities First
Environment Agency	Ruth Tipping
ELWa	Adrian Craft, Head of Learning and Development Networks
WLGA and Syniad	Steve Thomas and Colin Everett
Welsh Language Board	Gareth Smith, Gwenan Roberts
Welsh Development Agency	Martin Hall
National Parks in Wales	Nick Wheeler, Pembrokeshire National Park

Organisation	Interviewee
Wales CBI	Emma Watkins, Policy Officer
Wales Audit Office	Non Jenkins
One Voice Wales	Iwan Richards, Chief Executive
Wales Council for Voluntary Action	Tim Day, Head of Policy
Forum for the Future	Phil Allies

A1.20 These included politicians and managers from national government, ASPBs, the business sector, national inspectorates, other representative organisations, and voluntary sector interests. The topic coverage was contextualised to the duties and roles of different stakeholders. Views were canvassed on the interface between local and national frameworks and strategies, the integration of performance management frameworks, solving the implementation 'deficit' in strategy development, managing the tensions between participatory and democratic governance, realising the potential of, and removing the difficulties to 'joined-up' governance, implementing community leadership and modernisation, and managing the skills challenge involved in promoted collaborative capacities and competencies in managers and organisations.

4.   National Network Meetings

A1.21 Evidence was collected from a focus group discussion with 8 national policy networks covering a range of different policy areas. The sessions were arranged as part of scheduled meetings and were approximately one hour in duration. A range of issues were discussed especially the relationship between community strategies and each particular policy community. The groups generally consisted of about 20-25 people drawn from most local authority areas in Wales

- Welsh Association of Community Safety Co-ordinators.
- Health, Social Care and Well Being Facilitators Network.
- Local Authority Policy Officers Network.
- Wales Association of County Voluntary Councils.
- Community Planning Officers Network.
- Community Regeneration Network.
- Society of Planning Officers in Wales.
- Local Authority Equalities Network.

5.   Research Workshops

A1.22 Three half-day research workshops were organised at different locations in Wales, each workshop focusing on themes that we identified as being particularly relevant to the preparation and implementation of Community Strategies. The themes were approved by the Steering Group for the research project. In order to facilitate in depth analysis of the themes for each workshop we sought to limit participation at each workshop to 30 people. However, because interest in the workshops was so high we increased the maximum number of people we invited to attend. In the event not everybody we sent invitations to turned up on the day and a total of 90 people actually participated in the workshops.

The Programme for the Workshops

A1.23 The three workshops were organised around a common programme that was designed to allow maximum time for group discussion and feedback. The programme was as follows:

12.45pm	Buffet lunch	
1.30	Introduction, aims and expectations	Steve Rogers
1.35	Emerging research evidence and issues	Paul Williams
1.45	Group discussion session – Theme 1	
2.35	Feedback from groups	
2.50	Refreshments	
3.10	Group discussion session – Theme 2	
3.55	Feedback from groups	
4.10	Key issues emerging from the workshop	Research Team
4.30pm	Departure	

Workshop Themes and Questions for Discussion

A1.24 To ensure that the themes of each workshop were analysed as fully as possible each theme was broken down into a number of discussion questions. While it was not possible to ensure that every discussion group fully discussed each question, the questions did form a clear framework within which discussion took place. The questions were:

Research Workshop 1: Llandudno 4th July 2005
Themes: Implementation and Focus on Outcomes

Theme 1 - Implementation Arrangements

- Are the partnership arrangements that were put in place to *design* the Community Strategy fit for the purpose of *implementing* and *delivering* it? If not – why not – what needs to change?
- Do the arrangements for implementing the Community Strategy need to vary in line with different local definitions of the *purpose* of the Community Strategy?
- What arrangements have been developed locally for implementing the Community Strategy – and in particular for dealing with cross-cutting issues? Is there, for example, clear collective accountability and a Performance Management Framework? What appears to be working well and what is not working?
- What arrangements have you put in place (or intend to put in place) for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Community strategy? Who should be involved in monitoring and reviewing?
- What arrangements need to be developed to encourage the mainstreaming of the Community Strategy policies and priorities by each of the partner organisations?

Theme 2 - Focus on Outcomes

- Do local partners have a clear, shared understanding of what outcomes they wish to achieve with the Community Strategy? How can Community Strategies be designed to ensure that they contain a clear outcome-focused framework on which this understanding can be based?
- What methods can be used to ensure that partners establish (and retain over time) a focus on the outcomes to be achieved from the Community Strategy?
- What types of performance indicators and targets should be included in Community Strategies to ensure a continuing focus on outcomes?
- How can the Community Strategy be linked to the performance management frameworks of the individual partners - particularly where these frameworks contain statements of the outcomes that individual partners are seeking to achieve?

Research Workshop 2: Swansea 8th July 2005
Themes: Vertical and Horizontal Integration

Theme 1 - Vertical Integration

In this session we wish to focus the discussion primarily on the actual and potential role of Community Strategies in linking the plans, resources and activities of different tiers of government (the National Assembly/Local Authorities/Community Councils).

- In what ways can Community Strategies be used to achieve better integration of plans and strategies between different tiers of government? What are the most important outcomes that can be achieved by better integration?
- How can the Community Strategy process help achieve better vertical integration within each of the main policy themes (for example: the six policy themes expressed in 'Wales: A Better Country')?
- Do the National Assembly's proposals for 'local government plan rationalisation' provide a basis for better vertical integration of plans and strategies? (The proposals suggest a reduction in the number of plans that local authorities are required to submit from over 25 to just 4 - the community strategy supported by 3 other strategies - the health, social care and wellbeing strategy, a children and young people's strategy and, the local development plan.)
- What are the key actions that need to be undertaken by each tier of government to achieve better vertical integration?

And if you have time ... a slightly different kind of question:

- What needs to be done to ensure that there are appropriate linkages between the processes of formulating the Community strategy, implementing it and reviewing/evaluating it?

Theme 2 - Horizontal Integration

In this session we wish to focus on the actual and potential role in linking the plans, resources and activities of organisations at the local level.

- What experience have you had of trying to align and integrate the plans and strategies of individual partners and partnerships within the Community Strategy process? What have been the positives and negatives? What helps and what hinders?
- What are the most important outcomes that can be achieved from better local alignment/integration of plans and strategies?
- What is the most effective way of integrating cross-cutting issues within your Community Strategy?
- What experience have you had of trying to make adjustments to the budgeting and/or service delivery priorities of individual partners so that they are more closely aligned with the priorities expressed in the Community Strategy? What are the main opportunities and barriers to 'bending' the priorities of individual partners?
- What are the main issues for which it is most important that linkages are established with other local authorities and their partners - either on a one-to-one basis or in a sub-regional context?

Research Workshop 3: Cwmbran 19th July 2005
Themes: Partnership and Citizen Engagement

Theme 1 - Citizen and Community Engagement

- What methods/processes have you used to engage citizens and communities in the preparation of your Community Strategy? Which methods/processes have you found to be most and least effective?
- How have you responded to the information you have received from citizens and/or communities? How are their views represented within the Community Strategy?
- How can citizens and communities be actively involved in monitoring and reviewing the implementation of your Community strategy? What plans/ ideas do you have for doing this?
- What can local authorities (and their main partners) do to build the capacity of local communities to become actively engaged in the community planning process?

Theme 2 - Working Effectively with Partners

- What arrangements have you put in place to ensure the appropriate engagement of a wide range of public, private, voluntary and community sector partner organisations? Which aspects of those arrangements are working well and which are not?
- What, from your experience, are the key factors that (a) facilitate good partnership involvement in the community planning process, and (b) hinder or prevent good partnership working?
- What changes need to be made by national and/or local government to improve the engagement of partners in the community planning process?

Notes and/or recordings were taken of each of the group discussions and feedback sessions. These were subsequently analysed and the issues were taken into account in this report. Our notes from each of the workshops are being made available to participants through e-mail.

Workshop Participants

Themes: 'Implementation and Focus on Outcomes'

Cantwell, Michael	Sustainable Development	Wrexham BC
Cornes, Carol	Principal Officer	Conwy County Borough Council
Davies, David	Strategic Policy Officer	Denbighshire County Council
Davies, John	Community Link Development Worker	Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
Fitton, Patti	Health and Well-Being Coordinator	Conwy County Borough Council/Health Board
Gallanders, John	Chief Officer	Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham
Garwood, Vanessa	Principal Community Regeneration Officer	Powys County Council
Griffin, Hannah	Strategic Policy Officer	Denbighshire County Council
Griffiths, Darren	Community Planning Officer	Anglesey Council
Jones, Arwel	Senior Policy Manager	Gwynedd Borough Council
Jones, Denise Idris	Welsh Assembly Constituency Member for Conwy	Welsh Assembly Government
Jones, Gethin	Out of School Hours Coordinator	Denbighshire Council
Jones, Ken	Planning, Customer & Business Services Manager	Environment Agency
Lewis, Colin	Partnership Development	North Wales Police
McCourt, Vicky	HSCWB Partnership Manager	Flintshire County Council
Morris, Philip	Senior Community Development Officer	Cymdeithas TAI Clwyd

Ogden, Janette	Strategic Policy Unit Manager	Denbighshire County Council
Pritchard, Tasha	Student	Conwy County Borough Council/Health Board
Sion, Dyfan	Development Officer	Welsh Language Board
Spain, Richard	Policy Officer	Flintshire County Council
Starling, Les	Chair of North Wales Wildlife Trust	North Wales Wildlife Trust
Thomas, Huw	Chair of the Community Strategy Partnership	Anglesey Council
Willcox, Nick	Community Regeneration Manager	Powys County Council
Wong, Jenny	Performance & Policy Officer	Conwy County Borough Council

Themes: Vertical and Horizontal Integration

Allinson, Derek		Rhondda-Cynon-Taff Council
Berry, Lynne	Community Planning Manager	Carmarthenshire Council
Carman, Alison	Director of Strategic Community Operations	Swansea College
Davies, Kendal	Sustainable Development Manager	Carmarthenshire Council
Davies, Rhian	Community Planning Liaison Officer	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Davies, Sian	Community Strategy Coordinator	Gwynedd Council
Dear, Paul	Head of Community Involvement	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Devereux, Karen	Corporate Strategy Manager	Neath Port Talbot Council
Edwards, Lowri	Corporate Improvement Manager	Ceredigion Council
Gwynn, Elinor	Regional Communication & Partnership Coordinator	Countryside Council for Wales

Hammond, Helen	Policy Officer	Bridgend County Borough Council
Harrop-Griffiths, Sian	Head of Strategic & Partnership Working	Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust
Hopkins, Sarah	Policy Officer	Newport Borough Council
Jackson, Lucy	Corporate Policy Officer	Newport City Council
Jones, Mel	Communities First Programme Coordinator	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Kretser, Tejay de	Director	Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations
McGregor, Gillian	Area Development Manager	Welsh Development Agency
McKenna, Dave	Community Leadership and Engagement Manager	City and County of Swansea
Netherwood, Dr Alan	Sustainable Development Coordinator	Cardiff County Council
Palmer, Alison	Community Planning Co-ordinator	Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations and Caerphilly Borough Council
Paxton, John	Principal Policy Officer	Cardiff County Council
Phelps, Roy		Swansea Business Forum
Sharwood, Mark	Policy and Scrutiny Officer	Torfaen Borough Council
Smith, Julian	Objective 1 Facilitator for Swansea/Neath Port Talbot	West Wales Chamber of Commerce
Spain, Richard	Policy Officer	Flintshire Council
Thomas, Gareth	Assembly Official (Community First)	Welsh Assembly Government
Thomas, Huw	Area Development Manager	Welsh Development Agency
Twelvetrees, Alan	C & YP Strategic Manager	City and County of Swansea
White, Steve	Head of Performance and Strategic Planning	City and County of Swansea
Williams, Steve		Welsh Local Government Association
Wilson, John	Community Development Manager	Carmarthenshire County Council

Themes: Partnership and Citizen Engagement

Bickerton, Liz	Freelance Consultant	Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
Chapman, Gareth	Chief Executive	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Dobson, Lesley	Community & Education Team Leader	Groundwork Caerphilly
Elliott, Mark	Assistant Director, Corporate Finance	Ceredigion Council
Forster, Sara	Head of Occupational Therapy	Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust
Garwood, Vanessa	Principal Community Regeneration Officer	Powys County Council
Gray, Jeanie	Policy Officer	Big Lottery Fund
Higgins, Clair		Groundwork Caerphilly
Hollebon, Rebecca	Policy & Partnership Manager	Monmouthshire County Council
Hooper, Tim		Caerphilly County Borough Council
Hopkins, Sarah	Corporate Policy and Performance Manager	Newport City Council
Hurford, Daniel	Public Relations and Corporate Policy Officer	Welsh Local Government Association
Jackson, Lucy	Corporate Policy Officer	Newport City Council
Jacques, Bob	Sustainable Development Co-ordinator	Ymlaen Ceredigion
Jones, Arwel	Senior Policy Manager	Gwynedd Borough Council
Joscelyne, Cheryl	Project Manager	St Mellons Healthy Living Project
Maberley, Sue	Senior Regional Countryside Officer	S & E Wales, Countryside Council for Wales
O'Reilly, Virginia	Community Development Officer	Rhondda Council
Palmer, John	Assistant Chief Executive	Monmouthshire County Council

Parker, Andrew		Blaenau Gwent Borough Council
Paxton, John	Principal Policy Officer	Cardiff Council
Punter, Lesley	Principal Planning Officer	Welsh Assembly Government
Shaw, Dan	Policy Officer	Pembrokeshire County Council
Siddall, Stephen	Chief Inspector	South Wales Police
de Souza, Lorraine	External Relations Officer	Environment Agency Wales
Sussex, Paul		Bro Morgannwg Trust
Symes, Paul	Chief Superintendent	B Division, Gwent Police
Webb, Steffan	Chair of Community Engagement Sub Group	Better Life Consortium at R/C/T
Webber, Don	Corporate Policy Officer	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Whittaker, Sue	Bridgend Co-ordinator	Communities First
Williams, Huw	Assistant Director	Environmental Health, Ceredigion
Williams, Sian	Communities First Policy	Welsh Assembly Government
Woodhouse, Chris	Elected Member	Monmouthshire County Council

Topic Guide for Interviews with Community Strategy Officers

1.   Introduction
- Provide the respondent with the objectives of the interview.
- Give the terms of engagement (confidentiality).

2.   Role
- Which department/section do you work in?
- What are your main roles and responsibilities?

3.   Progress
- Can you provide me with a brief outline of main stages of the production of the community strategy with key dates?
- What is the current status of the strategy-draft or approved?
- What are the key milestones in the near future with rough dates?

4.   Context and Rationale (ToC focus)
- What are the particular objectives that community strategies are intended to achieve/problems they are meant to overcome?
- Is the policy on community strategies 'fit for purpose'? I.e. are they an appropriate instrument?

5.   Purpose
- What do you consider the main purpose(s) of the community strategy to be? (Prompt: better co-ordination; community empowerment; working in partnership or what?)
- What would constitute 'success' from your point of view?
- Are you aware of different views on the purpose(s) of the community strategy within the Council, and amongst your partners and other stakeholders?
- Has the understanding of the purpose(s) of the community strategy changed over time?

6.   Welsh Assembly Guidance
- Does your community strategy follow the guidance issued by the National Assembly? If not, in what ways does it differ?
- Has the guidance been useful?
- Do you consider that more guidance or support should have been provided by the Assembly? If so, what?

7.   Resourcing, training and capacity building
- How has the community planning process been resourced?
- Have you undertaken any training in working in partnership or organised capacity building events and programmes? (Please give details)

8.   Partnership Arrangements

- What arrangements you have put in place to prepare the community strategy?
- What forms and lines of accountability are there?
- Does your local partnership include all the main interests?
- Do you consider the structures and processes are fit for purpose?
- What have been the problems of working in partnership?

9.   Public Engagement

- What steps have you taken to involve the public and local communities in shaping the community strategy?
- Do you think that this involvement has been real or token?
- Have you made any special arrangements to involve the 'hard to reach' groups?

10.   Design and Content of Strategy

- What evidence have you used on which to base your strategy?
- Is there a relationship between local objectives and the objectives of Welsh Assembly Government?
- Is there a clear set of strategic priorities set out in your strategy?
- How have you thought about and organised the relationship between the community strategy and all the strategies and plans of the local authority and its partners?
- How do you intend to manage the cross cutting themes?
- Is your strategy based on the principles of sustainable development?

11.   Implementation Structure

- What arrangements have you made/intend to make to implement the community strategy?
- Are the managerial and structural arrangements you have in place for the design of the strategy fit for the purpose of implementation and delivery? If not, why?
- What steps are you taking to promote vertical and horizontal integration of policies and programmes?
- What arrangements do you envisage for encouraging the mainstreaming of community strategy policies and priorities?

12.   Evaluation and Performance Management

- Is your strategy based on an outcome-focused framework?
- If not, how do you intend to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy in the short and longer terms?
- Are there clear success criteria?
- Is the community strategy linked to existing Performance Management Frameworks (WPI, Policy agreements) within the council or any of its partners?

13.   Problems and barriers

- What have been the main problems and barriers you have faced so far in producing the community strategy?
- How have you resolved them?
- What are the main issues you anticipate in the future - particularly around implementation?

14.   Good Practice

Can you point to any aspect(s) of good practice in the design and preparation of your community strategy which you consider merits wider dissemination? (Please give details)

15.   Added Value

- In what ways do you consider that the preparation of the community strategy has added value to your organisation, to your partners and to the community in general so far?
- Where do you expect it to add value in the future?

16.   Any other Views

Do you have any other comments, observations or views to make on your community strategy process or community planning in general in Wales?

17.   National Workshops

This study is undertaking a series of national workshops. Which issues do you think they should focus/which issues would be of most interest to you?

Template for Rapid Appraisal

Strategic Management

- Is there a long term vision? (10-15 years)
- Is the strategy evidence-based?
- Is the strategy outcome-focused?
- Is there a clearly articulated implementation structure and framework?
- Is there an action plan that identifies shorter term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of the long term vision?
- Are there arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the action plan?
- Are there mechanisms in place to undertake periodic reviews?

Evidence and Needs

- Is the strategy evidence based?
- Does it contain a resource and activity analysis?

Local Partnerships

- Is the preparation of the community strategy steered by a Local Strategic Partnership consisting of a wide range of interests and agencies?
- Is there any evidence of capacity building or skills development associated with the community planning process?
- Are the community strategies clearly dominated by the Council? Or is there evidence of a wider commitment/ownership by other partners?

Public Participation

- Has there been effective community involvement into the preparation of the community strategy?
- Are there mechanisms in place to involve the community during the implementation and evaluation stages?
- Have the views of 'hard to reach' groups been canvassed or taken into account?

Strategy

- Does it contain a clear set of priorities?
- Do the priorities of the community strategy link with those of Welsh Assembly Government?
- Do the priorities of the community strategies link with those of other public agencies acting locally?
- Is there evidence that links the Council's corporate planning priorities to the community strategy?
- Is the strategy based on a set of underlying principles and values including sustainable development, equality and social inclusion, and are there arrangements in place to integrate them into the community planning process?
- Does the strategy include a formal sustainability appraisal?
- Are the differences between goals, principles, values and objectives clear?
- In particular, can the principles and values be operationalised and evaluated?

- Does the community strategy cross reference and/or rationalise other plans and strategies? In particular, are there links to the following: Heath, Social Care and Well being strategies, Older Person's Strategies, Children and Young Person's Frameworks, Community Safety Strategies, Communities First Programmes and Unitary Development Plans?

Implementation

- Is there a clear action plan that indicates who does what, by when and to what effect?
- Is there any reference to the resources necessary to implement the community strategy?
- Are there any proposals that promote vertical or horizontal integration of policies?
- Is there reference to mainstreaming strategies?

Evaluation

- Are there systems in place to monitor the progress of the strategies?
- Are these undertaken on the basis of a collaborative framework or in relation to the contribution of single agencies?
- Are there mechanisms in place to measure outcomes? Are these outputs or outcome measures?
- Are performance indicators used?
- Is the evaluation of the community strategy linked to Wales Programme for Improvement and Policy Agreements?
- Is the evaluation of the community strategy linked to the Performance Management Frameworks of other organisations?

Topic Guide for Interviews with National Stakeholders

1.   Introduction
- Outline purpose of interview.
- Give terms of engagement (confidentiality).

2.   Role
- Briefly, what are your main roles and responsibilities?
- How does your organisation relate to Community strategies?

3.   Context and rationale (ToC focus)
- What were the key contextual factors that influenced the development of the policy for community strategies from the perspectives of central and local government?
- Has that context now changed in any significant way? Is it likely to change significantly in the future?
- What are the particular objectives that community strategies are intended to achieve/problems they are meant to overcome?
- How will the development and implementation of community strategies bring about these changes?
- Is the policy on community strategies 'fit for purpose'? I.e. are community strategies an appropriate instrument?
- How is your organisation affected by the introduction of the community strategy policy? Is there likely to be more/less of an impact over time?

4.   Community strategies in the context of other strategies
- Do community strategies interact with any of the strategies or policies of your organisation?
- How do community strategies interact with other major strategies promoted at local level, e.g. Health, Social Care and Well Being strategy, Older Person's Strategy, Children and Young Person's Framework, Community Safety Strategy, Communities First Programme and Unitary Development Plan, or at a national level e.g. Wales Spatial Plan, Wales: the Learning Country etc?
- Do community strategies complement or compete with these strategies?
- Are some strategies more important than the community strategy? Why?

5.   Progress
- What progress have local authorities and their partners made in developing community strategies?
- Has progress been faster/slower than you imagined?
- What are the reasons for this?

6. Welsh Assembly Guidance

- Has the guidance been useful? Do you consider that more guidance or support should have been provided by the Assembly or others?
- If so, what and to whom, e.g. local authorities, partners, other stakeholders?

7. Involving others

To what extent have local authorities been successful in involving stakeholders in their community strategies?

- Public sector - are some partners easier to engage than others, why?
- Private sector
- Voluntary and community sector - how are marginalised communities involved?
- The wider public

Are all stakeholders equally important or does their importance vary depending on local circumstances?

8. Design and Content of Strategies

How far do community strategies demonstrate:

- An evidence base for priorities.
- Realistic vision and prioritisation of objectives.
- Arrangements for implementation.
- Coverage of cross-cutting issues.
- Effective evaluation and performance management.
- Linkage between local and national priorities.

9. Capacity

- Do local authorities have the necessary capacity to develop effective community strategies (right people, skills, resources, mindset, and relationships with others)? If there are capacity gaps, what are these?
- Conversely, do key partners have the necessary capacity to engage with the delivery and design of community strategies? If there are capacity gaps, what are they?
- Does the Welsh Assembly have the capacity to deal with the local diversity of 22 community strategies and what might be the implications of this diversity in practice for national policy?

10. Problems and Barriers

- What do you think are the main problems and barriers local authorities have faced in producing community strategies?
- What problems (if any) have your organisation/the interests your organisation represents faced in getting involved?
- How have you resolved them?

11. Good Practice

- Can you point to any aspect(s) of good practice in the design and preparation of community strategies which you consider merits wider dissemination? (Please give details)
- Are you aware of any good practice from English or Scottish experience?

12. Any other Views

- Do you have any other comments, observations or views to make on the community strategy process or community planning in general in Wales?

Case Study 1
Denbighshire Community Strategy

Overview

- Formulated a Community Strategy and Action Plans for 4 area partnerships; delivered to WAG on time; approved by Council and other partners signed-up.
- Convened a local strategic partnership with diverse representation.
- Set up Partnership Board and Partnership Steering Committee.
- Co-ordinated the preparation of the strategy; opportunity for networking/ sharing information/discussion on complementary agendas.
- Consulted and engaged with citizens, groups and communities in Denbighshire; focus around Area Partnerships.

Approach

- Strategy is high level, overly comprehensive, unfocused.
- Confused methodology around themed visions, objectives and targets.
- Absence of a framework for strategic prioritisation?
- Action Plan consists of existing or planned activities and programmes - not a re-alignment or reconfiguration.
- Where is the evidence of co-ordination or integration?
- Does not indicate how the cross cutting themes will be managed.
- Is it outcome focused and evidence based?

Partnership Board and Steering Group

- Loss of momentum/lack of clarity about role and purpose.
- Dominance of Council and mixed commitment of partner agencies.
- Concerns over profile, power and status.
- Lack of penetration/remains the preserve of the corporate centre.
- Implementation: top down mainstreaming (business planning) and/or focus on small number of exemplars.
- Performance Management: To what end?

Perspectives on the Community Strategy

(Source: Interviews with local authority officers and members of other organisations)

The Strategy

"in terms of the structure of the document, the aims and objectives disappear and don't follow through into actions"

"you could almost take Denbighshire off the front page and insert any other Council in Wales; it needs to be more customised"

"there is no point in having 'wish list' documents"

The Strategy (continued)

"the community strategy is everything and nothing"

"I think many people would struggle to understand the significance of the document"

"in terms of a statistical needs assessment, mapped against deprivation census; as far as I'm concerned that was and never has been done or used to support the development of the strategy"

"the strategy is not evidenced based; there is no projection of needs or analysis of what sort of Denbighshire we want it to be"

"the objectives identified by the area partnerships and the aspirations in the plan simply don't marry up"

"only marginally seen as a Community Plan"

"we don't want to let anyone down, so we put everything into it"

"I think the breadth of it is probably one issue - it's trying to be all things to all people and cover all areas"

"our community strategy is a combination of other people's targets which they should be doing anyway. And I don't think that is what community strategies are supposed to be about"

The Partnership

"the partnership seems to be a mixture of officers, retired people and people with hobby horses"

"the partnership group is too big and attendance is erratic"

"the purpose of the group was clear but it is not now"

"the partnership group has no power, limited responsibility and very limited authority"

"it is a waste of time listening to presentations"

"there is a lack of political engagement; little involvement of elected members"

"there is insufficient buy-in from the highest levels in the partner organisations"

"you are touching on ownership, and as a Council we don't have much"

"there is only tokenism from outside the Council"

"there is a problem of some pan-North Wales public agencies having to service more than one community strategy partnership"

"the partnership group is not binding on any organisation"

The Public

"area partnerships have not really impacted on our work; their role is unclear and there is confusion over their future"

"there has been mixed success with the area partnerships; you get the usual suspects in certain areas; they have no power and people don't want to get involved in talking shops"

"we need to re-engage with town and community councils"

"the area partnerships are the only things that worked and shouldn't be allowed to wither on the vine"

"area partnerships did a terrific job in public engagement"

"there is a perception that elected members see area partnerships as duplication and a threat to their democratic role"

"area partnerships are not representative; it is only the usual suspects; they haven't solved the problem of getting more people involved and involving the hard to reach groups"

Implementation

"this year we are going to integrate the community strategy and the improvement plan; directorates will have to report back on progress against targets and objectives"

"I think the difficulty I have is that it's (the community strategy) never been used effectively; it is very aspirational; it says what we would really like to do but in reality we cannot actually do it"

"the community strategy is a lovely colour document but what are we going to do with it"

"I suspect that many organisations feel that their contributions are limited to only a few areas and that even if they felt that they should do more, the organisations budget limitations and corporate priorities prevent them from engaging as effectively as they could"

"it's a leap of faith to hope that something may happen"

"we need to pick up the cross cutting work; let's focus on a small number of priorities and major on those"

"control over money is a step too far"

"the targets in the community strategy are too aspirational and therefore are not deliverable"

Implementation (continued)

"the targets in the community strategy need to be overhauled; currently they are not SMART, not clear, difficult to assess achievement and have not involved practitioners in their development"

"I don't think we link well with other agencies, and we tend to be compartmentalised as directorates and departments; it's difficult to work with various directorates because the workload is terrific"

"we have put together quite a good strategy but officers in other organisations have not signed up: there seems to be a problem of communication"

"once the document was put in place we reached a crossroads"

"the document fails by not identifying what we are going to do and how we are going to measure it"

"we don't have ownership of the document; it is too all-encompassing and aspirational"

"there is more ownership of the themed strategies such as the Health, Social Care and Well being strategy; there is more vitality at the thematic levels where there is more power and status"

Resourcing

"we have written to other partners to ask for a contribution but no-one wants to help and have received nothing from partners even though they are aware we haven't received anything from the Welsh Assembly"

Penetration and Mainstreaming

"at the moment it is a top down process with not enough involvement at the service level; it is driven by the centre"

"we provided some initial input into the strategy but have not been involved for a long time"

"we're a bit disgruntled that our input was usurped by something else and therefore we don't own the community strategy from our point of view"

"not everyone is signed up in the Council and it will be a long haul but we are getting there"

"there is no knowledge of the community strategy below strategic level which is a consequence of people being overwhelmed by strategies"

"not many people know about the community strategy in the Council; there has been no training or awareness"

"there has been some criticism from council officers that they have not been consulted on community strategy targets"

Added Value

"at the moment we've got something that no-one really supports, which people are really quite fed up with now, they have had enough of it"

"I can't say that it's made much difference to be honest; it certainly has not added value"

"the community strategy has helped get people around the table which hasn't happened in the past"

"at the moment it appears to be more of a monitoring document of what each partner organisation is doing everyday rather than helping to set any new direction"

"I have not changed the way I do business as a result of the community strategy but perhaps it has raised awareness of other things that are occurring"

"I'm not convinced that the community strategy actually helps deliver anything that would not be delivered anyway"

"there was enthusiasm in the Council when the Community Strategy was first introduced but over time it has decreased"

"it is not adding anything to my daily work"

Case Study 2
Cardiff Community Strategy

Overview

- Formulated a Community Strategy
  - Delivered to WAG on time
  - Approved by Council and other partners

- Convened a local strategic partnership with diverse representation
  - Co-ordinated the preparation of the strategy
  - Opportunity for networking/sharing information/discussion on complementary agendas

- Consulted and engaged with citizens, groups and communities in Cardiff
  - Communities of interest and geography
  - Capital Congress and Capital Forums
  - Young People's Forum

Approach

- Strategy is high level, overly comprehensive, unfocused
- Absence of a framework for strategic prioritisation? In what way can the strategy inform the way in which agencies make decisions about priorities and resource allocation?
- Action Plan consists of existing or planned activities and programmes - not a re-alignment or reconfiguration
- Where is the evidence of co-ordination or integration?
- Does not indicate how the cross cutting themes will be managed
- Is it outcome focused and evidence based?
- Added Value?

Community Planning Implementation Group

- Loss of momentum of CPIG/lack of clarity about role and purpose
- Dominance of Council and mixed commitment of partner agencies
- Concerns over profile, power and status
- Lack of penetration/remains the preserve of the corporate centre
- Implementation: top down mainstreaming (business planning) and/or focus on small number of exemplars

Images of Cardiff Community Strategy: From the Outside

(Source: In-depth interviews)

Strategy

"very high level and woolly"

"tries to be all things to all people; not focused enough"

"it is an amalgam of what happens at the moment, it doesn't add value"

"content does not shake you - nothing to disagree with"

"we can easily say we contribute to the strategy but we are not being driven by it"

"no problem signing up to the strategy because it says nice things"

"it is perceived as a Council Plan"

Focus for Implementation

Action Plan

"made up of things that are going on already/aggregation of existing stuff with more targets than Robin Hood"

"it is a re-statement/re-packaging of existing plans and priorities; not a framework for re-prioritisation"

"hotchpotch of things from large to small issues"

"no outcomes - just activity"

Bottom Up/Exemplars

"I think we should have a few cross cutting themes and have 2 priorities and mobilise action around them"

"we need to do something - the group needs to deliver - pick a project or part of Cardiff"

"we need quick wins in a couple of areas; pick on some priorities and mobilise joint action"

"it is a wish list; we need to prioritise the priorities; this year we do this, next year we do something else"

"money lends credibility and focuses the mind; CPIG could have a pot of money to use for demonstration projects"

Focus for Implementation (continued)

Top Down/Mainstreaming

"The mainstream is fixed (by WAG or UK government); we can only tinker around the edges"

"our money is not negotiable - we are only talking about the Council's money"

"synchronising business cycles is only a cosmetic exercise"

CPIG

"doesn't gel as a group"

"level of commitment is flaky"

"I can't have CPIG telling me what to do in terms of policies and finance"

"CPIG is an opportunity for networking particularly into the Council and knowing people personally"

"the ability to network and speak to others is a strength but I am yet to be convinced that the enthusiasm is there to make the strategy a working document"

"CPIG should not have an operational role"

"consistency of attendance is an issue; the meeting cycle is too ephemeral; and there is little consistency between agenda items"

"CPIG does not market itself well and has a low profile externally and internally"

"CPIG has no power at all; only power of persuasion and embarrassment"

"CPIG is not a decision making partnership"

"it's a rubber stamping group for the Council"

Added Value

"has not yet reshaped priorities of partner organisations"

"its made no difference to us"

Images of Cardiff Community Strategy: From the Inside

(Source: In-depth interviews)

Organisation and Penetration

"understanding of the community strategy isn't good enough in the Council because the community planning process is kept at too high a level"

"my level in the Council is utterly disenfranchised with the community strategy; it is seen as the corporate support's baby"

"there are definite different understandings and views of the community strategy; the biggest problem is where things are driven from - whether the council view is shared or whether things are driven by a bottom-up approach"

"the structure of the local authority can't connect up let alone help other organisations do it"

"I don't think the community strategy should come with a pot of money; because it should be part of what we do anyway"

Political Commitment

"the new administration can't scrap the community strategy, but I doubt if they're signed up to it all"

Performance Management

"the community strategy is turning into an outcome based strategy; the message is really coming through for the need for outcomes and not outputs"

"we have a performance management system in place which measures outcomes from the community strategy and corporate plan and then measures the cross cutting outcomes, which should help"

Cross Cutting Themes

"I am unsure that the cross cutting themes mean much in practice; I think people hang different things under different topics rather than thinking more fundamentally about sustainable development"

"sustainable development in the community strategy is rhetorical"

CPIG

"CPIG is being revamped at the moment and refocused because it is too much like a talking shop"

"my impression of the local partnership is that it is working well"

"the partnership tries not to be council led, but council officers have to take the lead which is frustrating from a council officer position"

"all partners want to be involved in partnership but they don't all necessarily want to deliver and become accountable"

"getting people to work together is a huge challenge because the council works in silos and it is difficult for partners to share agendas and pool budgets; there are so many agencies that it isn't easy; but we are taking a step in the right direction"

Added Value

"it is nice to get people talking to each other but not sure that having a community strategy advances things"

"our activities aren't really impacted by the community strategy"

"the community strategy and health, social care and well being strategy fit well together"

"it is crucial to have this strategy and it should not be left on the shelf"

Cardiff Community Strategy Partnership Health Check

What are the 3 things that have worked well with the Community Planning Implementation Group?

- The process has enabled the development of a real partnership which engages a far wide range of organisations than has traditionally been the case
- There is clear evidence that the Community Plan is integrated with and consistent with the business plans of partner organisations
- The partnership has been constructive, open, and relatively stable between people who understand the benefits of joint working
- Regular scheduled meetings held
- Wide involvement of community and voluntary sector representatives at Capital Form
- Appropriate membership on CPIG
- Providing a forum for responsible people who would otherwise have not met
- Raising awareness of the complexity of local government
- Providing a mechanism to address emerging concerns and for keeping all interested parties involved and informed
- Production of a strategy
- Participation in events such as Capital Congress

- Engendering a sense of partnership working
- Good communication between officers and members
- Some partners have developed mutually beneficial actions (but would these have happened anyway?)
- Attempts to co-ordinate business plans which could provide added value
- Wide representation
- Effective administration
- Good public involvement
- Good prioritisation of objectives process

What are the 3 things that have NOT worked so well with CPIG?

- Enthusiasm from partners is not backed by resources. Consequently, the Council takes the lead and controls the process whilst others play a reactive role. Also, the organisational and administrative burden falls on the Council
- There is a mismatch and varying levels of engagement between the dominance of larger organisations (who have a strategic role) and the smaller organisations that have an important role to play in the community but do not have the resources to engage effectively
- Inconsistent involvement from Lace
- Papers not sent out sufficiently in advance for proper consideration
- Agenda dominated by local authority
- Sticking to the timetable of meetings
- Recognising and handling organisational culture clashes between local government and other partners
- Keeping a wide range of organisational leaders engaged and motivated around a holistic view of processes
- Level of tokenism in the membership
- Unequal ability of partner to influence things
- Strategy focuses on process rather than outcomes
- No clear outputs to point to demonstrate joint working
- Lack of focus on the progress of the partnership (e.g. this survey)
- Lack of sense of priority and everything is vague
- Too much paper work
- Unclear objectives and lack of targeting
- No headlines in terms of good or bad success
- Lack of clarity in terms of criteria for membership of CPIG
- No monitoring of outcomes
- Lack of clarity about the significance of the process

General views on the effectiveness of the Community Planning arrangements?

- Process for preparing the strategy was inclusive but too drawn out and repetitive
- It is too early to make an assessment of the process; it takes 5-7 years at least to result in meaningful changes
- The partnership has worked well to produce the strategy but now appears to have lost its momentum and sense of direction; its role in decision making is unclear; it seems to perform as an information sharing group rather than one that focuses on implementation and review

- Unclear about the impact of new political control
- A lot of joint working exists outside CPIG and a key question is what power does CPIG have over it
- Lack of clarity about the purpose of Community planning, who it is aimed at and how it is measured

In what ways can the Community Strategy Partnership arrangements be improved for the future?

- Review the partnership particularly in terms of 'refreshing' the membership to include sections of the community who have not yet participated
- More publicity, preferably on a joint basis, to publicise the achievements of the partnership
- Introduce a stronger monitoring and performance regime to highlight progress against targets and aspirations in the Action Plan
- Need for a 'multi-agency' executive group to provide a forum for focused debate and to support decision making
- More participation from the business sector
- A means to focus variety of contributions from disparate religious groups
- Policy commitment from national and local government to sustain the process
- Need for shift in focus to manage the execution and delivery phases which need a change of membership of the group and the way in which business is conducted. Discussions need to take place more in workshop style rather than e-mail communication
- Need to demonstrate added value through the use of milestones
- Avoid turning the group into a 'talking shop'

Cardiff Community Strategy Partnership Health Check

Please consider the following statements in relation to the **Cardiff Community Strategy Implementation Group** and place a tick in the box that most closely represents your view.

The Need for Partnership Working

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The factors associated with successful partnership working are understood by the partners	14%	84%	0%	0%
The principal barriers to successful partnership working are understood by the partners	14%	84%	0%	0%
The Community Strategy Partnership can only achieve some of its own individual and organisational goals by working in partnership with others	56%	28%	14%	0%
There is an awareness of those particular areas of activity where partners can achieve some goals by working independently of each other	14%	84%	0%	0%
Partners are willing to make changes to achieve shared goals	0%	70%	28%	0%

Clarity and Realism of Purpose

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Community Strategy has a clear vision, shared principles and agreed key priorities	28%	42%	28%	0%
The Community Strategy has clearly defined shared aims	14%	70%	14%	0%
These shared aims are realistic	0%	56%	42%	0%
These shared aims have clear outcomes associated with them	0%	42%	56%	0%
The Community Strategy has identified where early partnership success is most likely to make a difference	14%	28%	56%	0%

Commitment and Ownership

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
There is a clear commitment to partnership working from the most senior levels of the partner organisations involved	0%	42%	56%	0%
Commitment to partnership working is sufficiently stable and consistent to survive most threats to its working	0%	42%	56%	0%
There is widespread ownership of the partnership across and within all the partner organisations	0%	14%	84%	0%
The partnership has individuals with important 'partnership' skills whose work is encouraged	14%	56%	28%	0%
Partnership working is encouraged through the use of appropriate rewards and sanctions	0%	0%	84%	14%

Developing and Sustaining Trust

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All partners are accorded equal status	0%	84%	0%	14%
The way the partnership is conducted is fair to all partners, and each has an equal say in decision making	0%	42%	56%	0%
Contributions, risks and rewards derived from the partnership are fairly distributed among all partners	0%	28%	70%	0%
Trust has not been undermined by external factors which affect the contribution to the partnership of individual partners	28%	28%	42%	0%
The partnership has succeeded in having the right people in the right place at the right time to promote partnership working	0%	28%	70%	0%
The partnership is robust enough to survive any mistrust that develops elsewhere in the parent organisations	0%	42%	56%	0%
Partners understand and respect differences amongst partners	0%	84%	14%	0%
Partners behave openly and deal with conflict appropriately	0%	56%	42%	0%

Robust Partnership Arrangements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Partnership working arrangements are as simple as effectively they could be	28%	42%	28%	0%
Partnership structures are time-limited and task-orientated	14%	14%	70%	0%
The partnership's principal focus is on process and outcomes rather than structure and inputs	0%	70%	28%	0%
It is clear what are each partners' roles, responsibilities and contributions	14%	42%	42%	0%
There are no interests excluded from the partnership	0%	70%	28%	0%
Partners are mutually accountable for their contributions, and share responsibility for successes and failures	0%	14%	84%	0%
Communications are sufficient and effective	0%	56%	42%	0%
Adequate resources are made available to service the Community Strategy Partnership	0%	56%	42%	0%

Evaluation, Measurement and Learning

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Community Strategy has clear success criteria in terms of both service goals and the partnership itself	14%	28%	56%	0%
Partnership successes are well publicised	0%	14%	84%	0%
Effective monitoring and review arrangements have been set up to measure the progress of the Community Strategy	0%	42%	56%	0%
Partners seek to learn from each other and from experience elsewhere	0%	56%	42%	0%

Case Study 3
Rhondda Cynon Taff Community Strategy

Local Authority Perspectives on the Community Strategy

(Source: In-depth interviews)

Purpose

"if it is well done the community strategy provides a unifying framework which all partners can work together and specify common goals of communities themselves and the organisations. At best it will mean that all efforts are directed the same way"

"partners seem fairly content for the council to play a lead role not least because it is more practical as we have the resources to manage the process"

"we have taken a strong leadership role"

"the community strategy is about joined up working and returning to the old fashioned values of community"

"opportunity to link closely with the community , agree agendas and plans and jointly work to progress those issues hand in hand"

Strategy

"the strategy has no framework for prioritisation"; "it is demand led and doesn't address the supply side and what can be done"

"we are battling with mission statements which use overly complex language for the public in a crowded world of mission statements"

"foundations to build community strategy in RCT to a certain extent"

"it does not feel that the community strategy is a driver in my policy area"

"we need to strip down the work we do and make some very clearer statements about outcomes and de-mystify some language to make it more understandable"

"there are clear priorities but we may need to focus on a few issues rather than it being all things to all men"

"the community strategy needs to be more strategic"

"seen as a professional document and does not sufficiently engage elected members"

"there is no clear relationship between local and national priorities"

Resources

"it does require additional resources to get a decent product at the end but we need to invest money in the product initially in the hope we will get value added as a result of it through joint working"

"it is easier for us to resource the community strategy being a large local authority but I sympathise with smaller ones"

"I think partner resources in terms of time was significant - without the partnership being in place and organising consultation, the whole process would have been empty; but in terms of actual spend it is almost exclusively local authority"

Implementation

"we are at the stage of information exchange but with outcrops up the scale in terms of co-ordination and integration"

"my perception is that people are more joined -up; open to other agencies coming in; we identify lead partners and others with a contribution to make; there is increasing intelligence of what other people do"

"we have done a lot of good work on designing strategies and plans, now we are at the crossroads of service delivery"

"implementation is through the thematic partnerships"

"we have a delivery framework for the community plan and partnership agreement between the BLC and the individual thematic partnerships"

Performance Management

"I'm worried that the targets and indicators make us overly bureaucratised"

"we have built our business plan to be very much with the Community strategy in mind; we wanted to make sure our actions link back to the main parts of the community strategy, so there is a matrix where actions link to specific partnerships"

"we need to focus on small number of achievable targets"

"the PI's and key messages do not make the best sense"

"the strategy is based on an outcome-focused framework"

"identified goals in the community strategy are wishy washy - if they were hardened up it would make them more effective and better owned"

"the targets and PI's that drive me and my service are not assessed around partnerships - I'm not assessed on my contribution to partnership working or how effective it is"

Performance Management (continued)

"one of the key measures are the quality of life indicators"

"the targets were not discussed with us"

"the key issues and key measures do not link up"

"there has been no attempt to link the community strategy with other strategies as this is not the aim of the community strategy - rather it is supposed to reflect the community consultation"

Penetration

"awareness of community strategy in the Council is patchy"

"I think a lot of people don't think about or understand their potential role in the community strategy"

"we don't have a council-wide business plan that spells out the link to community strategy and the low down business plans"

"need to make people more aware of a wider sense of direction and need"

"I think the biggest problem is engaging with internal staff rather than the public"

"communications and briefings are lacking therefore partnership work is not at the forefront as it should be"

"there is difficulty in making the community strategy work visible"

Partnership

"partners are not keen to give up their own resources"

"there is a lack of business partners involved with the community strategy; businesses are not interested as there is no money to be made"

"it is often the council officers who do the work even if partner representatives do the chairing; if the council did not do the work, I would expect the whole thing to fall apart as it is only the council who is interested in the overall community as opposed to one sector "

"there is also a timing issue with not all partnerships developing their drafts and plans at the same speed which is holding some of the more developed partnerships back"

"I think the BLC got off to a good start but it has lost a bit of energy over the last few months and lost a bit of focus"

Partnership (continued)

"partnership is personality driven - needs certain individuals to make it happen"

"council still leads on everything - some partnerships are more mature than others and some are in their infancy such as the environment partnership"

"the BLC needs to discuss role, power, relationships to move into an implementation stage"

"we need an executive group but there is a danger of becoming exclusive power brokers with others being tokenistic"

"we need a small group to manage the business - too much is currently left to the local authority"

"the voluntary sector think they are not taken seriously"

"strong sense that the council is influential in the community strategy - setting agendas, who speaks etc.

"there does not seem to be any lines of accountability between the BLC and the partnerships" e.g HSCWB and CYP

"the jury's out on the LSP! - we need to see service delivery improvements"

"not all partners offer the commitment I would like them to have"

"the voluntary sector can be difficult to get a true representation and the meetings are attended by the usual suspects; dealing with the business sector can be difficult as well"

"accountability and constitutional issues concern me who sets the rules?; arrangements are currently too loose; there needs to be some partnership bureaucracy"

"I'm not sure what the BLC discusses because the outcomes are not communicated"

Cross Cutting

"the community strategy has not driven sustainable development but it has given it a new focus and we have made the most of the situation; awareness has increased which has led to more people pushing it"

"I think the areas we have not got right are the audiences and the cross cutting themes; there is still some misunderstanding in those areas in how the audience groups, and how services cross the 5 pillars of the partnerships"

"cross cutting themes have not been cracked - it has not been decided how to manage them as they are very complex"

Public Engagement

"on a broad brush approach, the public were engaged quite reasonably"

"there has been a real effort on consultation; it has not been played at ; it is reasonably well thought out and followed through; but the initial drive has evaporated in part and we now need a reality check"

"public engagement has been very good"

"I was very pleased to have children involved in the process; however, there were still hard to reach people who were not involved in the consultation, like disabled people, homeless and travellers and those in long term care"

"consultation is a balancing act because it is resource intensive to reach the hard to reach groups"

"awareness of partnerships is still at a low level; do the public need to know services are being delivered in partnership?; should we push partnerships as branded entities and would that not add to public confusion of who does what?"

"the Congress was really good - real effort to engage the public without any spin"

"we must report on what the BLC does - to show what we are collectively doing but without stealing anyone's thunder"

"we need to market our profile and show we add value"

"real genuine effort put in; but there may be some problems with going back to the public about outputs"

Training

"there is no training for partnership working from the community strategy"

"we are not skilled at partnership working - we learn as we go along - there is no training from the community strategy"

Problems and Barriers

"no evidence that organisations are serious about doing things differently"

"have not got buy-in from partners generally for different reasons"

"danger of being officer-led"

"there is an element of frustration not just to the community strategy but to all partnerships - are there too many?; would a move to a shorter consistent approach be better?"

Problems and Barriers (continued)

"the issue of partnership fatigue is a potential barrier as there is a limited pool of people being challenged to work in collaboration on a whole range of issues"

"council is seen to be taking the lead"

"difficulty of achieving senior level buy-in"

"mainstreaming is difficult"

Added Value

"the initial impetus is slowing down"

"I'm positive about the potential but am concerned about barriers - political, bureaucratic, complexity, financial, honesty about relationships between different sectors and organisations"

"the new administration are not sure what this is all about- they are foisted with something not of their own making and they do not have the same commitment as the previous one"

"the capacity of unhelpful councillors to disrupt processes is immense - they say one thing in public but undermine it in practice"

"the community strategy is probably lower down the list of priorities compared with other strategies"

""we must give the current process a chance -we are too obsessed with refining, modifying and changing processes"

"there are already people in the system who are cynical about the community strategy, so we need to demonstrate added value"

"there is cynicism around the community strategy from partners and the public"

"not a vehicle to trap extra funding- not sufficiently steering well"

Miscellaneous

"we need WAG to be more joined up"

Partner Perspectives on the Community Strategy

(Source: In-depth interviews)

Purpose

"to try to address people's concerns and develop a multi-agency approach to them to avoid duplication and tackle cross cutting issues"

"agenda is really set by national imperatives"

"community strategy is a business opportunity for us"

"engage and work in partnership across different sectors to develop a plan for the community; not a council plan; to secure integration, citizen participation and it is meant to be implemented"

"to guide the partnership agenda to improve the quality of life of the people of RCT"

"an overarching plan with subservient plans tied into it and all directed in the same way"

Strategy

"it is easy to sign up to the document - to words that your grandmother would be happy with"

"no immediate benefits for business"

"the community strategy is too generalised - it needs to be targeted and prioritised - it should be project based"

"the community strategy has not taken account of what is happening in neighbouring authorities"

"the strategy puts things into a framework- it creates a whole-systems approach"

"does set a strategic vision and broad indication for the future"

"the community strategy does not provide a framework for strategic prioritisation - does not challenge the way we allocate resources - not even remotely"

"I expect key officers from themed partnerships to attend BLC meetings but they do not - we are creating a new set of silos"

"it is not clear whether the community strategy is the dog or the tail"

Implementation

"we need to move up a gear"

"we need to target projects and issues"

"we need an implementation plan - not things that will be happening anyway"

"we need an action plan with measurable outcomes"

"who is responsible for implementation - there is a tension between thematic and area partnerships"

"it is unclear whether the community strategy is owned within the Council - each section has its own strategy and officers do not understand other partnerships - there is little penetration of community strategy issues"

Resources

"there is an inordinate time spent in partnerships; WAG needs to invest in the voluntary sector's capacity to get involved and to encourage smaller organisations to participate"

"there needs to be resources for capacity building including money for meetings, costs of transport and other forms of communication"

Partnership

"BLC is dominated by the local authority"

"BLC should be the co-ordinator of everything - of each segment; to pull together the cross cutting themes via the strategic vision"

"the BLC cannot influence the way we do things because of national priorities and limitations - UK and WAG"

"there is limited potential for moving resources around between different policy areas"

"I'm not convinced that other partners have the same appetite for partnership working as ourselves"

"the community strategy does bring people together - may change minds"

"a bit unwieldy in terms of numbers; unsure of its purpose"

"we are seen as monitoring and scrutiny because delivery is the responsibility of others"

"relationship between BLC and other partnerships is unclear what are the accountability arrangements"

Partnership (continued)

"partnership working is a conglomerate of people with vested interests coming together"

"we have tried our best to be inclusive to get the business sector and voluntary sector"

"WDA and ELWa do not contribute to the debate - they just turn up"

"RCT is more open to the voluntary sector"

"the partnership lacks direction - there is a visible drop in commitment from the local authority"

"we have received lots of information from the council but not much from other public sector bodies"

"we are driven by a local authority agenda"

"BLC role is advisory but it should have a scrutiny role"

"three key players are not signed up -WDA, ELWa and council members"

"involvement with voluntary sector is not bad but the business sector does not engage"

"there are the right people around the table but they delegate too much"

"there are the right organisations but the wrong people"

"a public service board would be too cliquey"

Performance Management

"how are we going to measure success - this is a big weakness"

"too process driven - the plan and partnership are seen as ends in themselves"

"there is no collective accountability - we are all accountable back to our own organisation and frameworks"

Cross Cutting

"a bit of a mystery to everybody"

"sustainable development is not a high priority"

"there are too many cross cutting themes"

"policy integration tools induce a tick box mentality"

Public Engagement

"well intentioned but a problem of raising hopes and expectations of local communities"

"the process is fine but it's about continuing with it now; people need to come back to the public to trace a line between what they said and what actually has happened"

"taken seriously - more genuine than usual suspects - but still gaining views not real empowerment"

"the strategy reflects the things that people said were important but there were no real surprises"

"tension between representative and participatory democracy"

"now we are labelled the 'usual suspects' and we do not feel valued by councillors"

"future involvement of the public is tokenistic - vox pop will show that nothing has happened"

Problems and Barriers

"nobody is putting their hands in their pockets"

"partner organisations are not committed - there is disparate accountability"

"the new political administration has not the same level of commitment to the BLC and partnership working as the previous one; previously the leader and chief executive were often at meetings; now there is a lack of visibility and cooling off"

"there were no senior cabinet members around at the end of the day in the last Congress event - this sends a message"

"no new money"

"it does not do any commissioning or integrated working"

"there is questionable commitment of local authority members to partnership working"

> ### Added Value
>
> "it does not add value"
>
> "it needs to affect service delivery on the ground and it does not"
>
> "there is strategy overload; it is too complicated; it is controlled too much by the politicians and too bureaucratic and chimney-like"
>
> "RCT is partnershipped to death- we have 5 themed partnerships, the BLC, 12 area partnerships and 23 communities first partnerships and the relationship is less than clear between them"

Partnership Health Check

What are the things that have worked well so far with the Better Life Consortium?

- Well focused community plan
- Integration of different sectors
- Better life conference
- Growing trust between members
- General agreement about what needs to be done
- Commitment to shared values and respect for others point of view
- Creating a comprehensive community plan
- Achieving broad-based 'buy-in' to the plan
- Better life congress
- Awareness of contributions of different sectors
- Commitment of local authority to the partnership
- Involvement of the community and private sector
- Exchange of views
- Cross fertilisation of strategies

What are the things that have not worked so well with the Better Life Consortium?

- No publication of success
- Inability to pull together other partnership outcomes
- Lack of clear prioritisation of what needs to be tackled first
- Joint funding arrangements need to be established
- Still local authority 'lead' and not always 'all encompassing'
- Need to re-direct mainstream resources to focus on aims of community plan
- Transition from one political administration to another is poor
- Little monitoring of progress
- Little joint working or developing joint strategy
- Lack of business partners
- Inconsistency of membership

Views and Opinions of the Effectiveness of the Partnership Arrangements

- Developing the plan was relatively easy because most of the problems were self evident

- Easy for partners to sign up to and create a 'feel good factor' but implementation will be different
- Most of the problems can only be resolved by joint working and funding but there is little evidence that 'external organisations' are committed to putting funding in place to achieve desired outcomes. The fear is that the burden will fall on the local authority
- Very few partnership members have the ability to commit resources. Often these external organisations have their own priorities and budget pressures and whilst agreeing what needs to be done they then fall short of joint funding
- the partnership has started well but now needs to move to joint strategy development
- Focus is around local authority provision rather than joint initiatives

Suggestions for Improvements

- Need for realistic expectations on what can be achieved – with clear prioritisation for action, implementation and review and including joint funding arrangements
- Need for hard measurable outcomes
- Need to pick 1 or 2 tasks that can be achieved in a realistic timeframe and identify resources needed to take action. Otherwise we only have a wish list
- The current administration shows no evidence of commitment to the community plan and real partnership working
- Better performance monitoring is needed
- Relating strategy to individual organisation's activities need to occur
- Joint strategy development needs to be undertaken.

Please consider the following statements in relation to the **Better Life Consortium** and place a tick in the box that most closely represents your view.

The Need for Partnership Working

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The factors associated with successful partnership working are understood by the partners	0%	80%	20%	0%
The principal barriers to successful partnership working are understood by the partners	0%	80%	20%	0%
The Community Strategy Partnership can only achieve some of its own individual and organisational goals by working in partnership with others	80%	20%	0%	0%
There is an awareness of those particular areas of activity where partners can achieve some goals by working independently of each other	0%	80%	20%	0%
Partners are willing to make changes to achieve shared goals	0%	60%	40%	0%

Clarity and Realism of Purpose

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Community Strategy has a clear vision, shared principles and agreed key priorities	60%	40%	0%	0%
The Community Strategy has clearly defined shared aims	60%	40%	0%	0%
These shared aims are realistic	40%	60%	0%	0%
These shared aims have clear outcomes associated with them	0%	80%	20%	0%
The Community Strategy has identified where early partnership success is most likely to make a difference	0%	40%	60%	0%

Commitment and Ownership

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
There is a clear commitment to partnership working from the most senior levels of the partner organisations involved	20%	60%	0%	20%
Commitment to partnership working is sufficiently stable and consistent to survive most threats to its working	0%	20%	80%	0%
There is widespread ownership of the partnership across and within all the partner organisations	0%	20%	80%	0%
The partnership has individuals with important 'partnership' skills whose work is encouraged	0%	100%	0%	0%
Partnership working is encouraged through the use of appropriate rewards and sanctions	0%	0%	80%	20%

Developing and Sustaining Trust

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All partners are accorded equal status	0%	80%	0%	20%
The way the partnership is conducted is fair to all partners, and each has an equal say in decision making	0%	60%	40%	0%
Contributions, risks and rewards derived from the partnership are fairly distributed among all partners	0%	0%	100%	0%
Trust has not been undermined by external factors which affect the contribution to the partnership of individual partners	0%	80%	0%	20%
The partnership has succeeded in having the right people in the right place at the right time to promote partnership working	0%	80%	20%	0%
The partnership is robust enough to survive any mistrust that develops elsewhere in the parent organisations	0%	60%	40%	0%
Partners understand and respect differences amongst partners	0%	80%	20%	0%
Partners behave openly and deal with conflict appropriately	0%	60%	40%	0%

Robust Partnership Arrangements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Partnership working arrangements are as simple as effectively they could be	0%	60%	40%	0%
Partnership structures are time-limited and task-orientated	0%	60%	40%	0%
The partnership's principal focus is on process and outcomes rather than structure and inputs	0%	80%	20%	0%
It is clear what are each partners' roles, responsibilities and contributions	0%	20%	80%	0%
There are no interests excluded from the partnership	0%	60%	20%	20%
Partners are mutually accountable for their contributions, and share responsibility for successes and failures	0%	40%	60%	0%
Communications are sufficient and effective	0%	80%	20%	0%
Adequate resources are made available to service the Community Strategy Partnership	0%	80%	20%	0%

Evaluation, Measurement and Learning

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Community Strategy has clear success criteria in terms of both service goals and the partnership itself	20%	40%	40%	0%
Partnership successes are well publicised	0%	60%	40%	0%
Effective monitoring and review arrangements have been set up to measure the progress of the Community Strategy	0%	40%	60%	0%
Partners seek to learn from each other and from experience elsewhere	0%	80%	20%	0%

Research Workshops
Workshop 1: Implementation

Current practice and review

- Denbighshire is currently reviewing the Community Strategy in terms of how the actions are going to be delivered and monitored and how all partners can work together to achieve it. The structure is not there at the moment though. After countywide consultation, indicators were put beside the aims and aspirations and the audit is looking at these in terms of who now owns them. The review is looking at how the aspirational statements work in practice and in terms of delivery.

- One criticism by a representative from Flintshire County Council is that there is very little bilateral work between neighbouring councils in Wales and England. The partnership arrangement in this council has a layered approach: the Community Strategy is overarching, broad and strategic and the 'hard work is done by the supporting strategies'. The LSP thrashes out broad strategic themes and cross-cutting issues. On the issue of whether there are the right groupings to deliver on all these themes are in place, the member replied that in terms of the Community Safety partnership and the Health, Social and Wellbeing partnership, a lot of work was going on prior to the Community Strategy. Areas where the council were short were Regeneration (a new Regeneration manager has just been appointed to set up a Regeneration partnership) which involved economic and social regeneration and sustainability. Within the Lifelong Learning theme, on the Children's Services side, there has been a problem with training and co-tasking with the C-set.

- In Conwy there were pre-existing partnerships before the Community Strategy although they did not necessarily go by the same name; there was, for instance, a Regeneration partnership and a Community Safety partnership. Only one new partnership, Quality Environment, was created in response to the Community Strategy. The problem with pre-existing partnerships is that they already have their own agendas and funding from elsewhere, rather than from the Community Strategy. They just see the Community Strategy as another document and the result is silo partnership working. The council has asked an external body to review the partnership arrangements in terms of how the LSP is working and how things are reported and monitored. The partnership review will report at the end of September and hopefully there will be action plans for each partnership and a forward working plan for the LSP.

- In Powys there are 5 thematic partnerships that carry the expertise of the organisations. 15 local community forums were set up in creating the Community Strategy but the difficulty came in trying to produce local action plans but there is no funding available for them to act as implementing agents. The thematic partnerships see what they're doing as what they've always done. The difficulty is trying to combine what they know and do with the local knowledge from local community forums. Local community forums need to tools to deliver actions. As both the thematic partnerships and the

local community forums were established at different times, this has creates problems.

- In Gwynedd, the LSP has no power to do anything itself; it has to work through other partnerships; its role is to oversee what happens elsewhere in the delivery partnerships; to aid this, the chair of each partnerships sits on the LSP; also an officer group services the LSP with officers from each of the partnerships feeding information back and from each; there is a problem of status because many of the partnerships have been in existence long before the community strategy.

- Gwynedd use the concept of bridging priorities which involve c.10 local priority areas taken from an original list of about 30 (including affordable housing and community transport) and look to promote multi-agency action around these; they can trace the choice of the priorities to the original consultation; they recognise that this is work around the margins of policy but realistically take the view that the LSP cannot be an executive board because of individual accountabilities.

- Cross cutting issues: Anglesey use a locally developed generic policy integration tool (for use retrospectively and prospectively), and Gwynedd believe that this is helpful as a screening device prior to more detailed impact assessments; cross cutting work is also promoted through the use of partnership co-ordinator's groups such as in Conwy who bring together an officer from each themed group plus the co-ordinators from older people, younger people and rural recovery; one officer works with the chairs of each partnership group and these are not all council officers; discuss joint issues, raise awareness, effect communication and network; they take things back to the partnership board.

Specific issues

- A representative from the Welsh Language Board (WLB) criticised the lack of national guidance on Welsh language in the Community Strategy. The WLB issued a statutory circular to give some guidance on engaging with Welsh language organisations and the public. The representative said there is a lack of engagement with Welsh groups in some communities and that there's no contact in certain areas. One group member added that the geographical concentrations of Welsh speakers is different around Wales, while another said the problem with many official transcriptions is that 'posh Welsh' is used rather than the everyday Welsh used by the public. The result is that people fail to read things in Welsh.

- The Community Strategy may work well in the North of England but not in Wales because of its geographical differences.

- National organisations have to try and find officer time as there are 22 councils across Wales.

- Partners can't spare too many officers to attend as it comes out of their budgets. There's no financial backing for them to do this.

- Targets are a problem. All organisations have their own targets to meet as well as the Community Strategy. A multi-organisation approach makes things difficult and there needs to be multi-agency research done to avoid unnecessary duplication. Target setting appears to have been done in isolation and people don't know who wrote them. Consequently, there is 'no buy in at

the local level'. There is a need for clear performance indicators and targets to ensure ownership and monitoring.

- Getting the right people to sit on the partnership. It takes a while, a good few meetings, for a person to realise they aren't the right people/officers to represent the particular themes and others from the organisation would be more suitable. This is all time-consuming and only now is this being addressed. In instance it took three years to get someone from the Health Board to attend the meeting of the Community Strategy partnership.
- The six models - the ideal model is the rational planning model but most councils start from a position of 'we have to do this by a certain time'. It's a tick-box culture and it's only at the implementation stage that you realise it's difficult to implement and some of the targets are going to be difficult to achieve.
- In relation to models, there is a problem of identifying which purposes are dominant; in Denbighshire it is the rational planning model; but in others it is seen as different things to different people.
- There is a problem in separating the strategists from the implementers from the monitors.
- There is a need to realign the business planning cycles of public agencies so that community strategy priorities can be taken into account.

Resourcing the strategy

- WAG put local authorities in a position of weakness as they placed a mandatory duty on them to produce community strategies but did not place the same statutory duty on partners. Key partners do not know, therefore, how committed they should be to the Community Strategy or the financial backing they should give. The local authority is the single sponsor - there is no real partnership approach.
- During one Community Strategy meeting "it was mentioned that each partner would have to bring £5000 to the table, which was impossible, and felt like you had to buy your seat around the table. We, the voluntary sector, obviously couldn't afford that and neither could the Chamber of Commerce, a representative body, as it didn't have that kind of money. We worked around it in the end."
- Resources can mean time, expertise or taking an active role - it's not necessarily financial.

Other strategies

- A coordinator for Health and Wellbeing said the Health and Wellbeing strategy was already well established and was designed to cover many wide-ranging issues but nobody looked at where the Health and Wellbeing strategy and the Community Strategy were going to merge. The situation was that you had two competing strategies as both were impacting on many wide-ranging issues and other strategies. There was also consultation fatigue with the Health and Wellbeing strategy as everyone had to go out to consultation (police, Community Strategy etc). People said to those consulting "stop asking questions and get out there and do it." The coordinator said the structure of their LSP is that it is an overarching board and each partnership group is responsible for delivery.

- Once you identify problems there is a responsibility for solving them. The difficulty is when those organisations holding resources have already allocated their resources to their own individual strategies. 'What is the benefit of them changing the way they are working to fall in line with the requirements local people identified through the strategy process rather than just easily delivering what they said they'd do in their own little strategies and business plans.' The difficulty is not being able to say to partners that 'the benefit of the community strategy to you is ...' Partners simply see it as another document.
- There needs to be more linkages between plans and the Community Strategy. 'You don't want 20 people counting all the same beans - you want 1 bean counter and everyone contributing beans'. Where the different plans overlap should be where the Community Strategy should lie.
- Anglesey attempted to jointly produce the HSCWB strategy and the community strategy; they undertook joint consultation and needs assessment but the strategies diverged on production because of WAG prescriptions.

Who owns the strategy?

- A representative for a Housing Association said that there has been too much focus on producing a glossy, grandiose book with a wish list but there has been little done on how these things are going to be funded or who will be monitoring the outputs of the strategy. The representative questions how an individual association can practically deliver the outcomes. This raised the question of whether it is individual organisations or partnerships, which are responsible for delivering these outcomes. The group decided it depended on the issue.
- When looking at who decides the issue and who will implement it, such as middle to lower management level, the group identify the typology of 'Thinkers' (who provide and thrash out the vision/dream, consisting of senior officers and members) 'Deciders' (some of the people from the 'Thinkers' group) and 'Doers' (People who get on and deliver it).
- There is a silo approach to organisations' own plans.
- The Community Strategy partnership group became a theoretical talking shop. It did not get down to the community level despite consultation and workshops. The problem for implementation is that the top-down approach means that ownership is at the top and not the bottom.
- If you go below two tiers of management the rest of the core staff do not know anything about the Community Strategy.
- There is a lack of ownership of the Community Strategy - the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy means more to the NHS than the Community Strategy. "It's a nice document of how we'd like things to be in an ideal world but there's no buy in or ownership".
- There are loads of actions but no one wanted to sign up to saying why these actions were being done. One group member said theirs is more like the Civic Renewal Model as it focuses on process and actions but not in terms of delivery and why they are being delivered.
- There is a need for the duty to be extended to other public bodies to ensure that they are committed to implementation; another view is that enforced partnerships are not necessarily successful particularly when national priorities and targets limit the discretion and flexibility locally.

Focus on Outcomes

Measuring outcomes and outputs

- One group member said that when looking at outcomes and outputs the traditional way councils work is to focus on measuring outputs rather than outcomes. In Flintshire they have got quality of life indicators in their Community Strategy and the representative for this council said they measure broad outcomes and that they will try using these for two to three years and see how it goes. Other organisations, he argued, have their own indicators and many of these, such as in health and crime, may remain as outputs.
- The group said they set targets they know they can measure and don't set targets for those which are difficult. Sustainability is one area which is identified as being difficult to measure. It is also seen as easy to measure the number of crimes committed but more difficult to assess the fear of crime.
- Most community strategies are not outcome focused because it is too early; it was easier to put in existing outputs, activities and targets.
- It is very difficult to develop outcome focused measures; they can be both objective and qualitative based on perceptions.
- Timescale is a big issue because many results will not be realised for many years.
- Denbighshire is revisiting its community strategy because the vision is not sufficiently articulated into outcomes.
- Gwynedd is working to develop quality of life indicators to measure the community strategy success or otherwise.
- Anglesey is auditing existing targets and selecting from an existing suite at three levels: generic, themed and public opinion.
- In 2006, WAG will impose the suite of shared outcomes.
- Process outcomes are important to reflect the partnership process. Conwy have employed consultants to work with each of its partnerships to undertake a health check and development measures of effectiveness that can be checked on a regular basis.

Plan rationalisation and joined-up working

- This will impact on outcomes and outputs because the question will be asked whether the council and partnerships need to be delivering all these things.
- The introduction of the Spatial Plan and how this impacts upon the Community Strategy is another issue raised by the group. The Spatial Plan, for instance, raises the question of funding. One representative from Denbighshire said their council had discussed considering the local spatial plan, the local land use expression, as part of the Community Strategy and be guided by it. The problem with this is that the aspirational statements in their Community Strategy does not tell you anything in terms of land use.
- WAG is criticised for asking councils and partners to do joined up thinking but it fails to lead by example as its timescales are not linked.
- Flintshire is moving towards using Community Strategy themes as its new directorate structure. There is a Health and Caring directorate, for instance, and Planning is now Environment and Regeneration to meet the needs of the Community Strategy.
- Silo thinking. One example was given of Housing because it is the one department that has not engaged. Planners were involved with UDP at the time

of the Community Strategy process which affected their ability to engage with us. They had consultation on UDP and had 17,000 responses - we had 1400 to the Community Strategy. The planners still thought they had their 'day job' to do.

- Targets - Policy agreements, Corporate Plan, and Community Strategy, where does the alignment of these plans come in? An authority cannot achieve the targets by themselves as other partners are needed.
- Use of officer-led Implementation team in one council that operates below the Community Strategy partnership group.
- There is a problem of many outcomes where we have no control locally e.g. climate change, the economy.
- Also difficult to trace causal connections from policy interventions.
- Linking local to national priorities is an issue. It is easy to do at a general level, but what use is WAG going to make of all the 22 community strategies taken together?

Partners and outcomes

- It is difficult to get partners to focus on outcomes and trying to engage them on a number of different strategies and issues when the overall framework is not clear. One councillor from Denbighshire said people get settled in their position and role and then something else comes along and then they think their organisation may be better represented on that. There has been the Crime and Disorder Strategy, the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy, the Children and Young People's Framework, the Community Strategy and the local plan external group. You end up with calling on the same groups but from different positions. They should all be working towards one theme 'improving the quality of life for people in need so it shouldn't matter what they are called. Regardless of the theme it should be 'present the problem, consider the solution, walk away'.
- Problems with partners and achieving the best for the community. The usual suspects, Health and the Police, have their own national priorities and targets to do so the Community Strategy priorities are at the bottom of their list.
- A shared understanding? Everyone turns up at the moment because they have to. The representative from the Police said he knows what their role is on the partnership but he's not sure others do. Within the Police they have Joint Agency Group meetings where problems are highlighted, usually persistent ones, and the different agencies work together to solve it. They are now trying to solve problems even before they get to these formal meetings.
- There's no shared understanding of outcomes so perhaps a facilitator is needed to coordinate this.
- National organisations are spread too thinly. The representative from the Police disagreed and said there was more room for flexibility despite the expectations of the Government, local force and local objectives.
- Under-representation of private sector on Community Strategy partnerships. In Powys the CBI could not even give the name of someone suitable to sit on the partnership.
- The representative from the Police said they now have consultation groups with lower level officers to inform them about the Community Strategy, otherwise they would see it as overly bureaucratic and fairly meaningless. It would simply be another 'big document dropped onto a desk'.

- It was suggested partners target their own internal organisation's rubric and see which are the key things in the target they can do to make a difference and the ones they already do.
- Focusing on key targets - of the 20 targets the police do, 18 can be done in-house but there may be 2 key targets which need external help and that's what the Community Strategy should focus on. At present most community strategies focus on too many targets.
- There needs to be senior enough figures on the partnership to make decisions at the meeting there and then. They need to have the power or be given the power to sign up and represent their organisation at the meeting (have terms of reference was one suggestion) so that decisions can be made there and then. The partnership group should publish in advance what is to be discussed at the next meeting so representatives of organisations can go to the appropriate person for advice or the power to act before the meeting if the more senior person cannot attend.
- There is a need to find extra resources to develop integrated Performance Management Frameworks between agencies.

Other strategies

- Communities First. Using this as a comparison it was said that it was a ten-year project and each partnership is represented in thirds - business, community and strategy. It is supposed to draw up local action plans for the area but there is also a trust fund of £20,000 per year to fund quick fix problems in the community. Unless the Community Strategy does something similar, one group member argued, people will just get fed up with it. Another member reposed by saying you have to have both as investment takes time to deliver.
- Communities First. Plans are drawn up and made with funding from WAG but these plans are put together with little or no consideration of the Community Strategy and its aims and objectives. It does not fit in with the Community Strategy and nobody has given this much consideration. Some felt Communities First projects received so much money they did not know what to do with it all.
- Funding for Policy Agreements and Community Strategy - more made of this link and use of funding for strategy.

The role of the public in implementation

- Local people. They are often interested in a particular issue and it is difficult for them to think in ten to fifteen years time, they tend to think and live in the here and now. The majority do not think strategically. Local people start off attending the meetings all enthusiastically and you'll get forty or fifty people attending meetings but this then drops off to a core group of five or six individuals.
- A good example of community involvement in delivering an outcome is in Denbighshire where the rural community wanted to have blue box recycling and dump bins. The issue was raised during a discussion workshop which resulted in the community getting the blue boxes and dump bins and it being responsible for phoning once the bins are full and ready to be emptied. It is an example of real partnership.
- There are things you can do as a community which you can't do as an authority.

Workshop 2: Vertical Integration

Lower tiers

- People involved in the smaller picture need to see what their role is in the bigger picture. This would close the gap between strategic policy officers at the top and the needs and wants of people at the bottom. There needs to be 'buy in' at the lowest level, for both private organisations and the public. The community strategy will mean different things to different people. When exploring who owns the community strategy there are different perspectives of what it should be.
- Community councils. There is vertical integration between WAG and the county council but there is very little between the county council and community councils. A representative from Carmarthenshire disagreed and highlighted the structures in place in Carmarthenshire: there are six community networks, which work with the community strategy and six local community plans, and involve town and county councillors, partner organisations, voluntary sector and the local community. They meet on a quarterly basis and representation from town and county councillors is good. Integration across processes. This structure is challenged on the grounds that community and town councils have been bypassed and something new has been created.
- Tension between council and community. This is all part of the negotiation. The vision comes from the council and what the community needs so there will be tension. They are negotiating what is acceptable. Context is an issue here as someone new coming into the policy making arena will challenge silo working.

Problems of integration and coherence between the different tiers

- Focus on outcomes - community strategies should line up with WAG. There also needs to be better engagement and more effective use of resources to facilitate vertical integration. It needs to make a difference to people's lives.
- 'If you try and force a complex picture where you haven't got consensus and push too far the coherent picture in the document gets drawn out and you lose consistency. You then lose the fuzzy edges because they don't fit the clear vision. There needs to be better communication between the levels of government as it's a complex mosaic. If you move too fast in trying to get that into a clear picture you lose some of the fuzziness and then you'll lose people.' One person disagreed saying clarity is vital for vertical integration because without clarity people won't get involved or understand why what they are doing is a good thing.
- On the issue of integration it is about everyone contributing to a vision and it's the responsibility of other organisations and partners to make sure they and their plans and strategies all go in the same way.
- Striking a balance. People need clarity or else they won't get involved but if it's too clear and the document too tidy, people will be alienated by it. So it shouldn't be set in stone but it should perhaps be a bit clearer.
- Tension between local and national priorities. How can we mix local and national priorities when sometimes they don't meet? That's why integration cannot be carried too far as people won't buy into it. One criticism is that national priorities from WAG are being pushed too far down the line as possible without consideration of local priorities. There is negotiation over

Policy Agreements so there should be negotiation with local parties over the community strategy and national priorities and come to accommodation. It should be possible in theory.

- Key policy directives. There are six themes from WAG and there are the views of the partnership and evidence from public consultation and sometimes there is direct correlation but more often than not there is not. Example: If we are to target certain money to treating cancer in our area but may not have as great a problem with cancer as the rest of Wales, but do have a real problem with teenage pregnancies, can we discuss the redirection or reallocation of this money?
- Coherence and coordination. You need to coordinate tensions, not necessarily resolve them, but have a shared purpose/coherence.
- Loosely defined outcomes. If we are all clear in terms of outcomes then perhaps we would not need the community strategy. We could just do whatever is necessary to meet these outcomes. One person also asked why there was a need for everyone to work towards the same thing in Wales as every locality is different and has different needs and priorities. If there are loosely defined outcomes then everyone would feel involved in meeting these aims - nobody would feel excluded.
- Assembly - Integrated Impact Assessments tool seen as potentially having a role to play in improving integration.
- There was a recognition that Assembly Policy was not as coordinated as it could be, the way the Assembly Divisions work encourages silo working, the Assembly has a poor record is delivering coordinated/joined up Government. Although in their defence the Assembly is young and it was believed that they were starting to try and address this issue.
- Recognition that Community Strategy Partnerships should lead on key across cutting issues, but that the coordinators of all the key partnerships should meet at regular intervals at a local authority level.

Resourcing

- Comparisons made with Community Safety Partnerships which were generally well resourced and had access to substantial funding streams and had dedicated officers to help drive the agenda forward.
- Issue raised about whether Assembly funding through Making the Connections and the wider efficiency agenda could be used to pump prime Community Strategy Partnerships, which would be also be central to delivering wider efficiency savings between partners.

Plan rationalisation

- There needs to be better integration in terms of documentation (how the spatial plan links to the community strategy, the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing plan etc). Plan rationalisation by itself is not enough as there needs to be processes to sustain that as well as between other bodies. You can't capture all this in the document as you need practical processes to make this happen. Plan rationalisation would help in terms of coordination but not necessarily in terms of coherence.
- Any reduction of plans has got to be a good thing'
- Plan rationalisation. 'Can't stop strategy happening - it will spring up all over the place. It won't stop planning by reducing plans. Local authority officers are

like a box of fleas in a lidded box - if you remove the lid they'll still jump the same height. They can't do things differently - they'll still want an action plan'.

- Concerns that Spatial Plan which has largely been planning led to date but could have a significant impact on how funding is allocated locally.

The six models

- Different authorities will take different bits which fit them politically partnership and community-wise. 'The tension is that the community strategy is there to create a vision and drive the implementation of that and at the same time the document is being asked to respond to the needs of the community. In an ideal world they'd both be the same but they aren't because you've got groups and organisations driving their agendas in creating the vision and at the other end you've got the community not knowing what's going on.'

Horizontal Intergration

Aligning and integrating plans and strategies

- Question posed should the Community Safety Strategy and Community strategy be the same? The WDA and County Council work together on the Joint Regeneration Strategy - they have maximised resources, there is a partnership approach and there are joint action teams.
- There are odd conflicts between community strategies and other strategies because they've been developed at different times and in different ways.
- One representative describes some strategies as just compendiums to existing strategies and that is why they do not offer a challenge.
- Identifying the conflicts is a seen as a good starting point for the first revision of the community strategy.
- Community Strategies tended to cherry pick from other plans/strategies. In Carmarthenshire 6 area forums have been established and consider needs of their area within the overall Community Strategy framework - these looked at needs of their areas and fed these into the strategy. This structure was used as the basis of a bid document for European funding streams, around £6million available. These fora are community led - and key partners cannot apply for resources.
- Integration tool has also been used to assess key plans/strategies for undertaking equality, sustainability and health assessments.
- Joint training on cross cutting issues at strategic level seen as important in improving integration. Heads of Service and key players need to hear issues. Examples of internal networks of officers within Council's cited as helping to improve communication.

Delivery

- One representative highlighted how they avoided duplication by getting the partnerships to agree on the same action points but that they would not repeat the same action (example of reducing economic activity given) would go into the economic prosperity theme and therefore did not need to go into Education and Lifelong Learning. The question was raised of how organisations worked on delivering that and the reply was that Job Centre Plus was working on it and though it involves a learning network, it is not mentioned under

the Education and Lifelong Learning theme. There was no protectionism about strategy.

- Evidence of organisations playing their part in terms of delivery, shifting resources and working together. One member said WDA, ELWA and local authorities would not expect things to change too much as they are already expected to work closely together. The community strategy should just enforce that.
- Ensuring good relationships. Holding open, public events. Have a long history of working together so you're 'not going into a room for the first time'. You also need people of like mind, particularly those at the top.
- It was suggested there needs to be updates from every representative on the partnership. One criticism is that when asking for updates from people regarding progress that they'll say 'we're developing our project plan, we're funding our project plan, setting up our project development board, getting tenders together and it won't have started delivering yet but are dressing it up to look like something is happening. It may be 18 months before things get done'.
- Neath - targets for each theme and partners assigned responsibility. Regeneration Masterplan £450k over 10 years plan - this is jointly managed by partners.
- It was acknowledged that partners tend to want short term pay back/quick wins and don't see the long term picture.
- Pooled budgets offer the potential of partners addressing priority issues and getting more 'bang for your buck'. The examples of pooled budgets between Health & Council (post hosted by one body) cited as working well.

Resolving a contentious issue

- The question was asked whether the group knew of any contentious issues which the community strategy has helped resolve. One group member highlighted a case where an issue appeared but it remained contentious: in one council two policy objectives came head to head: one dealing with regeneration and job creation (economic sustainability) and the welsh language (community sustainability). Both objectives were in the community strategy and the lead executive member, who had signed up to the objectives by signing up to the community strategy, abstained when it became apparent the two were in conflict.

Communities First

- Relatively easy to cross reference different business plans, however what is difficult for Community Strategies is to build in area focus, if this does not happen it can alienate communities. The challenge is to get local Communities First action plans tiered and built into Community Strategy.
- Communities First is a key priority and involves liaison with other sectors at a local level, there is often frustration at the lack of understanding of each others agendas and the ability to shift resources around to meet agreed priorities.
- A general debate about the linkages between Communities First and community planning ensued, there was recognition that Communities First can be local delivery mechanism for community planning.

Workshop 3: Citizen Engagement

Methods of citizen engagement:

- Distribution of a survey assessing quality of life with free newspaper; citizens' panel of seven hundred based on a microcosm of the area (Gwynedd); public meetings again assessing quality of life; fifteen local area forums in Powys where they put together local action plans, feeding into themes and sitting underneath the overall partnership. Cardiff held a democracy week and used a version of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* to engage with citizens.

- Monmouthshire has been divided into four areas and each area has an area forum. People sitting on these forums are members of the public but they represent local interest groups. Each area forum developed a local area plan and the council concerned is trying to improve upon how they link the local issues identified and strategic issues. The representative who outlined the structure above said that those who sit on the forums are self-selected. Area managers wrote to local organisations to see who came forward to sit on these forums and they also targeted under-represented areas in terms of recruitment.

- Monmouthshire: use an overlay of methods including panels and groups; but the public sector is a long way behind the private sector in isolating needs and understanding its business and who use a sharp customer focus and personalisation of need. The problem of marginalised and disempowered backbench members can be solved by linking them to the community strategy in their areas.

- The Monmouthshire forums differed between areas as within one area there was a town partnership, which focused on urban issues, and a rural partnership, which focused on rural issues. A group member from the Vale of Glamorgan said they had a Barrier Regeneration Forum, which focused on urban issues, and a Rural Area Partnership, which focused on rural issues, although there is no formalised division between the two.

- Powys has set up fifteen local community forums. Attendance at these forums was enthusiastic to begin with but this has declined so they are not as representative. The council is very different in terms of its geography and although these forums are not working particularly well or well attended they are seen as a start. The representative from Powys went on to say all the comments made during consultation, were sifted through, put under the themes identified, and partnerships were asked to look at their action plans to see how they compare. Local community action plans and partnership plans were then also compared. What has not happened yet is to feed back the results of this process to the public.

- A different system employed by Gwent is to have an overall forum which considers the whole borough, below that is a steering group, and below that are key action area groups, so this is seen by one representative as avoiding some of the geographical issues highlighted by other group members. The council sent out a summary of the Community Strategy and a questionnaire for consultation. It flagged up the consultation in the local media and community groups were visited and presentations were made. The feedback which was gathered fed into the forum and then it was integrated into the plan where applicable.

- The Vale of Glamorgan started with a clean sheet and asked people the issues important to them. Where appropriate these issues fed into the Community Strategy. It also used a 10% sample of the 3,000 strong citizens' panel. The representative said most of these methods weren't that productive in revealing issues that the council already knew about. There needs to be awareness, however, that the information gathered is not done so in such a way as to simply support the council's views.
- Ceredigion: strong elected members who dislike citizen's panels and see them as a threat, so there has been pretty minimal involvement in the community strategy. Although the Council tried to make clear that Community Strategy was not Council's strategy there was no co-ordinated, widespread approach to citizen/community engagement. Just have 5 thematic partnerships. Huge task to do properly "but if you don't do it properly it's not worth doing". No dedicated resources made available.
- Caerphilly: area based involvement with consultation through local community partnerships (set up as part of Communities First), area forums and the standing conference. Involved a wide variety of community groups but representation was weakest in terms of communities of interest e.g. ethnic minorities.
- What is consultation and does this lead to empowerment? It is 2-way in Caerphilly - between the high level community strategy and individual local area partnership action plans but difficult to find where local partnerships have affected the big strategies.
- RCT: still very much about consultation and information sharing. It is not real engagement because this involves "opportunities to influence agencies decision making processes, agenda setting and processes"; community groups are resource starved and hence they are unable to move from consultation to engagement but things have improved over the last few years; RCT used vox pop and video stopping people in the street; but how representative are these and who edits the tapes; but there was a consistency of replies; gave a very dramatic visual evidence.
- In Bridgend experience had not been satisfactory. There had not really been any culture of engagement in LA corporately - despite Communities First funding. Held series of workshops - illustrated a clash of cultures between local community representatives and community workers and the 'planners' (Criticism directed particularly at transportation planners - but also at corporate staff leading on Community Strategy). Ideas got lost when they went back into the 'planners' in the local authority. What emerged was "a lot of local government blurby stuff".
- In Newport the experience had been very positive. Used a wide variety of approaches - citizens' panels, surveys, focus groups, public meetings and 2 large conferences that attracted large numbers and wide variety of people from community. Community Strategy team in corporate centre asked a lot of people to help them identify community groups and representatives to invite to the conferences - e.g. Communities First co-ordinators. Results from all the engagement exercise were fed back into Community Strategy team who analysed them. Had a real impact on Community Strategy: (1) a new Environmental Issues theme added to the Strategy; (2) 2 new partnerships created to support/implement the Strategy - Environmental Issues and Marketing/Image of the area. The approach in Newport also differed from

Bridgend in that it was decided early on to keep the Community Strategy to high level, 'headline' issues - not too much detail. Saw Community Strategy as being about broad strategic issues and long term. The detail was left to the individual thematic partnerships to develop. This seems to be working well.

- Group discussion focused on why the differences between Bridgend and Newport had come about. In Bridgend things are very centralised. Initial consultation was only with big Voluntary Organisations. Community based workshops didn't work because local authority didn't know how to communicate or wish to respond. In Newport, Community Development had been identified at reorganisation as a service that should be developed - and it has been - now has strong foothold in area - unlike Bridgend. Newport an area of great contrasts - one ward is ranked number 1 on child poverty in Wales - and is only 5 miles away from one of the most affluent areas in Wales. Major industrial decline has had major impact on area and on local authority - 'forced us to really accelerate'.

Who is *'the community'* and problems of engagement.

- Problems in defining who the community is and how to engage them. Community councils are seen as out of touch and unrepresentative so existing structures are not seen to be working. Also there is the risk of excluding other groups by concentrating and focusing only on one (i.e. consulting only young people).
- Another criticism is that people cannot always understand the document but another group member responded that if there was more ownership of the document at the local level then this would not be a problem.
- Reviewing the Community Strategy. It was argued that they can only review it if they understand it and own it. In one council discussions were being held regarding a scrutiny group of 200-300 people, mainly from voluntary sector organisations, to review the Community Strategy.
- The difference between a geographical community and a community of interest. One argument is that communities of interest are easier to involve.
- One group member said he feels like everyone is chasing the same citizen and citizens are likely to feel consultation fatigue with so many other public organisations chasing them for their views. He suggests there should be more opportunity for sharing consultation.
- Monmouthshire like to use the word 'citizen' because of its connotation to democratic government; Newport use residents or citizens; Pembrokeshire use members of communities which differentiate with the term customers; RCT have a citizens panel and communities of interest such as the Welsh Language community.
- One view is that the term community should be deliberately left vague to promote inclusiveness; more specification invites exclusion.
- Deprived communities often have a stronger sense of community than more prosperous ones.
- What is the outcome of involvement per se?
- Ceredigion suggest that the community strategy is too process orientated and there is a huge conflict between elected members and participatory democracy.
- Involvement results in raised expectations that often cannot be met.

- General agreement in group that it was very difficult to ensure that you engaged all types of communities/interests/groups in your engagement exercise. "You have to realize that you can't get 100% coverage". Also some debate about fact that not all individuals/groups/communities wanted to be engaged. If they didn't there wasn't a lot you could do.
- WLGA representative argued that people wanted quick responses to their immediate problems – 'they didn't want to engage with long-term visions.' Supported by someone else in group – 'people will only be involved if they see link between strategy and their own specific issues/problems.' This argument was not supported in Newport where there was evidence that visioning engagement had worked to a considerable extent. Argument challenged by Lesley Punter (Welsh Assembly) "That's just received wisdom. I would like to challenge it – I'm not convinced – need to test it out. We do have evidence of people willing to be involved in strategic issues. Getting everybody involved in the process is important. We need to understand under what conditions people are prepared to be involved in discussion of strategic issues. We also need to be able to specify what is a 'good enough' engagement process – for Community Strategies and for other strategies – rather than aiming for something that is absolutely perfect and probably impossible to achieve."
- The 'good enough' argument was strongly supported in the group. Issue of linking engagement to publicity/PR drives was also important. E.g. Newport: "We felt that our conferences gave us a 'good enough' feel of what people thought the key priorities were."
- One group had a debate about whether E-Government was helping or hindering engagement with communities. Majority view was that it was hindering – making services accessible but conversely making local authority and public sector partners more distant/neutral. Losing the personal touch that was essential to community engagement. Government pushing us down this road but its not helping.

Resourcing, Capacity Building and Implementation.
- Town and Community councils. The group identified that it was difficult to involve these bodies in citizen engagement because they argue they already represent local people.
- One representative raised the idea that participation should be issue driven rather than having regular structures in place. Participation, it was argued, should also be led by an outside organisation rather than council-led.
- The idea of an Open Strategy was mentioned whereby the strategic process is put onto a website and all interested parties contribute stage by stage online, with the strategists taking note or responding to their input. This method was criticised by one group member who felt this seriously harmed direct contact and input into the process, or in other words, there was little human interaction.
- The links between Community First and Community Strategies needs to be explored and build on the capacity of the former.
- It was suggested that three priorities should be focused on and there should be reports back on those priorities annually.

- One representative said that his council is considering doing a liveability survey next time as people do not see public agencies as separate. This may help to address the problem of duplication.
- Funding. There is funding for consultation for the Old People's Strategy but none for the Community Strategy.
- Pembrokeshire: we need to rethink our purposes.
- Monmouthshire: use 4 area forums that have the potential for improved engagement.
- Caerphilly: use partnerships at area and community basis augmented by household surveys, viewpoint panels and focus groups.
- RCT: community strategies are different from Objective 1 strategies; they haven't got money attached to them so what's the point; bending budgets is too vague so you can stick anything in and pretend it's the community strategy.
- One view was that you can only promote partnership working through external funding being the catalyst e.g. structural funds (it is too difficult to effect a re-allocation of existing budgets); a contrary viewpoint was that we cannot keep relying on external funding and we must disinvest in some areas to be able to invest in others e.g. co-locating community safety teams such as in Monmouthshire.
- The only way to co-ordinate actions is to merge accountabilities and organisations but there is no evidence of a rationalisation of budgets and plans at a local level nor reconfiguration of agencies and functions.
- Reducing the number of partnerships will reduce the need for resourcing.
- Monmouthshire: resourcing is patchy but we are doing some facilitation skills training with staff.
- We need a central resource from WAG to resource the whole process; a national pot of money; Caerphilly would like c. £160k per year (based on funding 4 strategic co-ordinators); you could top slice money from all public agencies to fund a national pot.
- Another view is that it is about organisations doing things differently not begging from WAG.
- The conclusion to the Bridgend v Newport debate was that 3 factors were present in latter but not former: (1) resources were devoted to the engagement process; (2) there were established community networks that were accessed as part of the process; (3) willingness/preparedness to really engage and to try to respond to community views/perceptions
- WAG representative (Lesley Punter) stressed importance of aligning engagement processes for Community Strategies with those of new Local Development Plans - guidance for which she was currently working on. "We don't want to develop separate systems for Local Development Plans."
- Rep. from Housing Dept at RCT made strong point that some individual services had built up good strong client and community engagement processes over a period of time. It seemed that in some areas the corporate staff running Community Strategies were not aware of these - or were unwilling to use them: "The corporate centre has to learn about these processes and build on them rather than just inventing new processes just for the Community Strategy."
- Group agreement that all local authorities hold a lot of information about communities that they never actually use.

- Both Bridgend and Newport reps agreed that they had picked up lots of new information/perspectives/anecdotes from their workshops/conferences. Difference was that Newport used this info - Bridgend apparently did not. Newport: "Conferences re-affirmed our faith that local people really are interested in what is going on".

- General agreement that however good the engagement processes were, the proof of the pudding lies in whether the local authority and partners can deliver on what is in the Community Strategy. Two fundamental strategic tests of Community Strategy: (1) can it deliver seamless services? (2) can it deliver really joined up thinking? "If it doesn't deliver on these then it's relatively meaningless".

- Above point led to debate on what Community Strategy is/should be. Is it just a very broad guide to a possible future - or should it be something more specific? Seems to be a divergence between Welsh Assembly view that it's a vehicle for joined up thinking, plan rationalisation, strategic planning for public resources etc - and the concept that it's essentially the communities' view of what they want/need.

- A rather negative view from a NHS representative was "Our agenda is set and our resource use is determined nationally by WAG. We only get citizen engagement when something goes wrong or there are very particular local health issues exercising the community"

- Newport had given some thought about how to involve the community in monitoring and reviewing the Community Strategy and was planning further community conferences next spring that would play a part in reformulating the strategy. This in context of seeing the strategy as being subject to formal review every three years but with an annual assessment of progress involving provision of feedback to community on strategy generally and on specific issues of importance.

Partnership Working

Partnership structures

- One representative from Gwynedd outlined the structures in place in his council: two representatives from each of the thematic partnerships sit on the steering board but, after a review was conducted of this structure, it was revealed that they were not always the key people from key organisations. The Chairs of the six to seven thematic partnerships sit on the steering board. Although the preference is always for someone at chief executive level to be on this board, this is not always easy at the local level as it is at regional level (i.e. Police).

- **Ceredigion** - Have tried to emphasise partnership principle by ensuring that not all the 5 thematic partnerships are chaired by local authority people (e.g. Environment Partnership chaired by Environment Agency person). Although Community Strategies have resulted in some formalisation/ rationalisation of partnerships it remains somewhat ad hoc. There is also a problem that no one organisation is responsible for the overall process (My comment - this is interesting point that suggests local authority has been reluctant to take responsibility and may explain general lack of progress in Ceredigion - and possibly other local authorities?)

- **Newport** - did audit of partnerships - not a completely scientific exercise. Looked at where there were key linkages between partnerships and where issues cut across different partnerships - e.g. Substance Misuse straddles Community Safety Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Partnership. Asked key people who their key linkages were with. Now have reasonably well structured partnership structure - not ad hoc but not perfect either. Important point is that you need to regularly revisit your structure of partnerships - sands shift, new policies, new legislation; new angles all mean you have to re-appraise partnerships.
- What is partnership? "It's the ceasing of hostilities in pursuit of money"
- Lack of focus and purpose; constant revisiting of fundamentals.
- Partnership structure in Powys: there are five thematic partnerships and there are lead officers who pick up issues from these partnerships and then feed it into a steering group and a wider community strategy partnership. The latter meet on an ad hoc basis.
- The output is seen as working in partnership and the outcome is seen as delivering the plan.
- Key issue expressed as either building on existing partnerships or focusing on new strategic partnership. Newport disagreed - had to be both. Tactics involved: (1) Building on existing partnerships where they were working well; (2) Trying to influence the agenda of certain partnerships to ensure that they were in line with current national/local agenda; (3) creating new partnerships where there were obvious gaps.

Problems of involvement

- Different local interpretations/emphases of partnership. Partnership as involving all 3 tiers of government. Partnership as essentially public sector - co-ordinating public resources in area. Broader concept of involvement of wide variety of public, private and vol. and community sector.
- Concern about partnership used to by-pass democratically elected councillors.
- But councillors perceived as a potential problem - they can remain very concerned about their power. Tendency for some of them to hark back to pre-reorganisation days when councils were smaller and everyone really did know everyone else.
- 'Link to Communities is a more important part of Community Strategies than partnership'.
- "In my experience partnerships that have been set up specifically to support the Community Strategy are more effective in this respect than existing partnerships. Existing partnerships already have a job to do. They sometimes don't see relevance of the Community Strategy - they may even see it as conflicting with their own purpose."
- Problems for local authorities in determining exactly who their partners were.
- One group thought that the key questions that needed to be addressed were: 'Is it possible to generalise about which partners have been most and least ready to engage with in Community Strategies/strategic partnerships?' and: 'Is it possible to generalise about which partners local authorities have found it easiest/most difficult to engage with?'
- Some people thought that Community Partnerships (Communities First) can be good partners - but this view was not uniformly accepted in the group. In one

case the local authority had actively supported the community partnership, as a result of which it had gained in confidence and ability to take action.

- One view expressed was that there were now too many community based partnerships - and that too many of them were overloaded with professionals rather than community representatives.

- Public Sector partners - key problem was seen as their having different policy, performance and resourcing agendas/requirements. General agreement that a lot of work needed to be done to get them 'singing from the same songbook'. Positive references to Plan Rationalisation, the new set of core indicators and the current development of shared outcome indicators. Newport said they had been given a 'sneak preview' of new set of core indicators. Their view was that, once you break them down, there are still over 200 indicators. However - did agree that Assembly was trying to rationalise PIs. It was also agreed that work needed to be done on matching planning and budgetary time-scales across public sector.

- Engaging representation from the business sector generally agreed as being difficult to achieve - because there are no structures to tap into, unlike for instance, the voluntary sector. Also because "they have a bottom line mentality - time is money and they don't want to waste time talking." However one authority, while agreeing with general view, stated that they had good relations with Chamber of Commerce and with Urban Regeneration Company (which was formed to deal with crisis following closure of steel works). A lot of small businesses simply don't have the capacity to be involved.

- Engaging the business sector was a common problem and one group member said his Chief Executive recommended the Chairman hold breakfast meetings with people from key areas like Rotary do.

- One council had good representation from the business sector in the form of Boots regional manager but he left and they have the Director of Chamber now. They too had tried the business sector.

- Attending partnership meetings. One of the problems identified is that people delegate down and down to less senior figures. In Gwynedd, however, they can't do that as part of the Partnership Agreement, agencies can't delegate from the Chair or Vice-Chair. If the specific person cannot attend then they cannot delegate.

- Another group member from Cardiff said they had approached the issue differently by being more concerned that those who attend are empowered enough to make decisions.

- Partnership meetings. It was felt that meetings were all one-way with the information and chase-up provided by the council. One group member said he was sceptical whether people attending those meetings took anything back with them in terms of information. In one council there is a co-ordinator for each theme who provides the minutes and an action list which is emailed to everyone and they use the list to help them report back on what they've been doing. One group member from the voluntary sector said that you need to understand why you are working in partnership as you go along to meetings, say all the right buzz words, and then leave going 'I'm not doing that!'

- There is also the danger that once partners leave the meetings they once again return to silo working practices.

- The question was raised as to why it is a statutory duty for the council to work on the Community Strategy but not for partners. This approach means that if

partners attend meetings and it works for them, they'll probably come again, but if not they won't return.

- Carrot and Stick. The stick needs to be more implicit and the carrot linked to relevancy. If partners can see how the Community Strategy is relevant to their performance targets then they'll see why it's relevant. Councils need to have someone in charge of developing these relationships.
- Newport: the basic ingredients are good strong personal relationships with trust and commitment; a lot is down to personal relationships; what about community groups and the imbalance of power relationships in high level LSP Boards?
- Monmouthshire: most meaningful partnerships are where 2/3 people in executive decisions agree to make something happen.
- Caerphilly: quality of personal relationships is the most important factor; true test is whether you can fall out but not damage the long term relationship; too many partnerships are just back slapping exercises; problem of when you lose key people from partnerships.
- Lack of accountability; problem of multiple accountabilities - trade off between own organisation and the partnership; must be open and transparent and people need to understand where you sit.
- Pembrokeshire: it is the HSCWB strategy that is the most important but generally whatever is the newest gets the most attention; it currently is the Children and Young People's Partnerships.
- One group member said one of the problems identified with partnerships is that there is a tendency to use existing partnerships and that those partnerships see themselves their purpose and role as what they did before. If they are challenged over this they say 'you are asking us to do more than we do'. The environmental partnership is different as it is a new partnership, not based on an existing one, and it is clearer on its role in the community strategy.
- Problem of the community strategy being dominated by the council. On the strategy group the standard composition was a mixture of private, public and voluntary organisations with little representation from the community. One group member said people were invited to sit on the strategy group. Another commented that their LSP had around fifty members and a smaller steering board would be needed. The group qualified that this representation needed to be on a partnership basis not just individuals representing organisations.
- Turnover of staff on strategy groups. Often good individuals who have been part of the process leave the group as they have found other jobs and the mechanism and relationship built up is lost. This was seen as a problem of ownership and that as long as the organisation can see the benefit of its involvement then they will continue to stress the importance of the strategy to its staff, new or otherwise. One group member said that if the partner were to become a funder that they'd definitely require evidence of benefit.

Resourcing issues and capacity building

- One idea discussed within the group member's own council was to have both a key local partnership co-ordinating body and a management team at chief executive level, the latter to meet twice a year to make strategic decisions.
- Another group member said they had thought of trying something similar where there is a chief officer group that 'looks over the shoulder' of the

steering group but the decision was made to simply bring those officers into the existing group and the system is working.

- Spatial Plan. This plan is going to drive the expenditure of some of these bodies and the implications of this for the Community Strategy need to be considered.
- LSP and efficiency savings. One council is currently working on generating efficiency savings and it is doing so by working with the Police, NHS Trust, etc. to achieve a range of cross-cutting savings. The dilemma then is who gets these savings and how are they distributed.
- Performance Indicators and a short-term planning. Everyone is driven by performance-indicators and the funding for project work is never longer than three years. One group member said their vision in the Community Strategy is for 2020 but that there is no way they can plan for then especially when financial planning cycles do not go past 2010.
- Financial contribution from partners. One representative from the voluntary sector questioned why they had to contribute financially when a lot of the problems the council were addressing were council created. An example she provided was that if the Police are drawing heavily on council resources to combat youth crime, then the council should not have shut down so many youth facilities in the first place. She said it was a vicious circle and professionalisms and silo working get in the way of a more holistic approach.
- Voluntary sector. The council is not prepared to fund the voluntary sector even though it is seen as a key partner. There are immense expectations of the voluntary sector but there are not huge resources or core funding to help them meet these expectations.
- WAG. Criticised for its own lack of understanding of what community planning is about as there is little evidence of joined up government at assembly level (example of the different items the council must consult on but all are done independently of each other).
- Welsh Assembly guidance criticised for being too loose. "Nobody had produced the 'Haynes Manual' on how to design and operate strategic partnerships."
- What can WAG do? - more extensive sharing of information across policy/ service/institutional boundaries. 'My staff complain that they can't get the info they need from other public organisations (especially health).
- 'Delivering the Connections' - just launched - this could/should be used as a springboard for real 'joined up working'.
- Community Strategies are dependent ultimately on the goodwill/interest of many individual managers in a range of organisations. Some managers still have a very narrow, protective, defensive perspective of their role." We need a clear framework/set of requirements for all public sector organisations to support partnership working."
- Danger that partnership is seen as the answer to everything.
- Too many partnerships.
- Improving the effectiveness of LSPs will require: a rationalisation of partnerships; making better linkages to the delivery partnerships; involving Town and Community Councils; enhancing the profile of community strategies; needing a clearer focus on purpose in delivery; lean on other partnerships to perform.

- The question of why steering groups do not have terms of reference was raised. Without such terms then it is difficult for people to know why they are on the group and what they are empowered to do. It was suggested that 'virtual members' could be used which involves individuals being involved as and when needed and when the matter is relevant to them. Such individuals do not need to attend all the time and this could be set out in the terms of reference.
- One council had a standing conference where partner did presentations so the whole event is not dominated by the council.
- One local authority had started providing basic information to community based partnerships to help them be more effective - who is who, who does what etc. Agreement that community representatives need a lot of experience of being involved in civic society before they have the knowledge of 'the system' that enables them to be effective.
- Audit of partnership. These audits, where they have been carried out, have been conducted by council and they focus only on who attends and which organisation they represent. A number of group members were annoyed that the audit does not even identify what a partnership is and in what capacity it operates.
- Powys has tied images together. As well as organisations having their logos in the community strategy, the community strategy has its logo on, for instance, the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing strategy. It is case therefore of 'our logo is also on your documents'.
- Point also made was that if Community Strategies were to be truly strategic then there were many issues on which local authorities could not act unilaterally - they needed to work on cross-boundary basis with neighbouring authorities.
- One group reached agreement on the following list of practical things that help strategic partnership working:
  - Good representation across all sectors - appropriate membership
  - Appropriate structure of thematic partnerships below the strategic partnership - these need to be working effectively for the strategic partnership to be effective
  - Personal attendance of members required - no deputies.
  - Minutes/action points of meetings - with responsibility for action made clear
  - Willingness to address local 'hot-spot' issues - don't avoid them
  - Clarification of responsibility of other public services to participate and (but in practice this is a problem).
  - PIs to measure progress on outcomes and process
  - Trust between individuals essential - at end of day a lot is down to personalities.