

CABINET

2nd November 2011

PROPOSED MERGER OF NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Margaret Sherrey, Portfolio Holder for Community Services.
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes.
Relevant Head of Service	Angela Heighway, Head of Community Services.
Wards Affected	All Wards.
Ward Councillor Consulted	
Key Decision: Yes	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 In order to discharge it's duties in relation to crime reduction under the Crime and Disorder Act 1988, Bromsgrove District Council currently hosts and participates in the Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership (BCSP). The purpose of this report is to update members on the issues currently affecting the BCSP and seek Members approval to the Strategic Partnership arrangements being changed. Specifically, this report sets out proposals for the merger of the Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) with Redditch Community Safety Partnership (RCSP) and Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership (WFCSP). This would result in the creation of a North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND to the Council:-

- 1) That Bromsgrove District Council approves the merger of Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) with Redditch Community Safety Partnership (RCSP) and Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership (WFCSP) resulting in the creation of a North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP); and**
- 2) Subject to endorsement by each of the Responsible Authorities to the merge that authority be delegated to Officers to take the necessary steps to implement the merger, including the establishment of governance arrangements and entering into any agreements, also subject to endorsement by the relevant CSPs;**
- 3) Members note the continuation of locality based operational and responsive partnership working through the operational Tasking Group and its theme groups; and**

- 4) **Members note the intention to review the Countywide partnership arrangements by 2014.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 BCSP receives Home Office grant each year to fund community safety activity. In recent years this grant has reduced and will face further reductions in 2012/13. Table 1 shows the level of Home Office grant received by, or expected to be allocated to, BCSP.

Table 1

Financial year	Funding
2010/11	£87,574
2011/12	£71,695
2012/13	£37,440

- 3.2 Furthermore, from April 2013 onwards, whatever Home Office grant remains will transfer to the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The PCC will have considerable freedom to allocate such resources that may remain as he or she deems appropriate. This may result in CSPs receiving limited or no funding via this route.
- 3.3 At present Home Office grant is used by BCSP to fund a number of staff, on fixed term contracts, hosted by Bromsgrove Council and Worcestershire County Council. Home Office grant is also used by BCSP to fund project delivery. Reductions in this funding will challenge BCSPs ability to retain staff and deliver projects. Community Safety staff who are mainstream funded will not be affected by the grant funding arrangements via the PCC.
- 3.4 At present there is not an intention to pursue a shared staffing structure across North Worcestershire. Bromsgrove and Redditch currently operate a shared community safety team. There is ongoing dialogue in respect of support to a revised NWCSP which will release Officer capacity across the three districts.
- 3.5 At this stage, there are no cashable savings to be realised as a result of the merged Partnership arrangements, however, the benefits of such a shared Partnership arrangement are outlined within the report at 3.20 to 3.24.

Legal Implications

- 3.6 BCSP is a statutory partnership which is responsible for co-ordinating the response of local agencies to crime and disorder and associated issues (namely substance misuse, anti-social behaviour, other problems adversely affecting the environment and reducing re-offending). Under section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Bromsgrove Council is a "Responsible Authority" . As such the Council has two main legal duties:-
- a) under sections 5 and 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 the Council and the Police in partnership, are required to collaborate with each other to develop and implement strategies and plans for dealing with crime and disorder and associated issues; and
 - b) under section 17 of the same Act, the Council is required to have due regard to the impact of each of its functions on crime and disorder and associated issues.
- 3.7 In a NWCSPP, Bromsgrove Council would retain these responsibilities. Any conflicts of interest between the member authorities may require an 'authority lead' for each Council. It is proposed that this would be a passed up to Director level and Head of Service.
- 3.8 The other Responsible Authorities within BCSP are Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police, West Mercia Police Service, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority, Worcestershire Primary Care Trusts and the West Mercia Probation Trust.
- 3.9 The additional Responsible Authorities under a NWCSPP would be Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council.
- 3.10 Section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as amended by S97(3) of the Police Reform Act 2002 and S108 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009, sets out the circumstances in which the Responsible Authorities for each CSP area can join together to work as a combined partnership in order to carry out their functions under section 6 to 7 of the Act. Any such merger must be in the interests of reducing crime and disorder, combating misuse of drugs and / or reducing re-offending. It is also important that all the relevant responsible authorities have agreed to take such action.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.11 Over the last ten years, partnership working has contributed to a sustained fall in crime and disorder across all communities in North Worcestershire. This has been supported by the local CSPs. The landscape in which the three CSPs operate has changed and is continuing to change. In multi-tier local authority areas the Home Office has encouraged CSPs to look at their structures and consider merging where this would create greater coterminosity across agency boundaries, stronger strategic influence but not impact detrimentally the delivery of crime reduction.
- 3.12 As a result of this changing landscape the Worcestershire Responsible Authorities decided to review how the CSPs were operating and would be able to operate in the future. Also a number of partners were highlighting logistical problems servicing the current partnership meetings and activities at the strategic decision making level.

The current partnership landscape in Worcestershire

- 3.13 There are currently four statutory CSPs in Worcestershire:- South Worcestershire (a merged partnership of Malvern, Worcester and Wychavon districts), Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest. Joint working between the CSPs on both strategic and operational matters is well established although on an informal basis. Each CSP has operational Tasking Groups that deliver the projects/interventions for the Partnership within the District. These local Tasking Groups are supported by directly employed local authority Officers. There is no proposal to change the local direct delivery arrangements at this time.
- 3.14 In addition there is a countywide strategic group, the Safer Communities Board, made up of senior Responsible Authorities representatives and wider stakeholders. This Board, through a Community Safety Agreement, sets the strategic priorities countywide and provides funding for CSPs. This Board also has a statutory standing. Sitting alongside the partnerships are a significant number of other groups that support the CSPs and the Safer Communities Board. There is also a higher spatial level strategic approach to community safety through the West Mercia Criminal Justice Board, which includes senior criminal justice and upper tier Local Authority representation and is currently in part preparing for the introduction of the new Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

Consultation on future partnership structures and priorities

- 3.15 A Task and Finish Group was commissioned by the Safer Communities Board to undertake a review of partnership working within

Worcestershire. A key element of this work was to confidentially interview senior representatives of the Responsible Authorities, CSPs and key stakeholders to establish their views of current and potential future working arrangements. These interviews were undertaken by an Inspector from West Mercia Police who was independent from the current arrangements.

- 3.16 There were a wide range of views and observations amongst all Responsible Authorities however there was unanimous agreement that the current status quo of four CSPs was unsustainable and two options were considered:-
- a) to restructure into one County based CSP or; and
 - b) to move to two CSPs, north and south and the Safer Communities Board as the strategic County Group.
- 3.17 At the meeting of the Safer Communities Board on the 22nd September 2011 by majority vote the recommendation was that “the Board agrees to the restructuring of the current CSP arrangements into two CSPs (North and South Worcestershire) and one County Strategic Community Safety Board and recommends this decision to the Worcestershire Responsible Authorities”.
- 3.18 A number of Responsible Authorities agreed that any partnership arrangements would need to be reviewed when there was a relationship developed with the new PCC.
- 3.19 The report outlining the findings of the Safer Communities Board Task and Finish Group (Appendix 1) has been presented to the following:-
- a) the Worcestershire Chief Executive Panel on 16th September 2011 were in support for a North Worcestershire and South Worcestershire CSP arrangement;
 - b) the Safer Communities Board on 22nd September 2011 recommended by a majority of the Responsible Authorities for a merged North CSP (subject to Responsible Authorities formal approval); and
 - c) Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership have been part of the Task and Finish Group and have supported the proposal for a merged North CSP.

Benefits of Merging

- 3.20 Bromsgrove CSP have supported the proposal to create a NWCSP.

- 3.21 The greatest benefit in creating a merged partnership is viewed to be the release of Officer capacity to allow the operational staff time to deliver community based initiatives and projects to the communities of Bromsgrove.
- 3.22 With recent funding announcements all partners are having to review their ability to attend a wide range of partnership meetings. Whilst not an issue at the moment there is the real potential that less senior representatives of Partner organisations may not be able to service 4 CSPs across the County.
- 3.23 A merged CSP will significantly address this issue and ensure the correct representation at a strategic level.
- 3.24 Other benefits include:-
- a) the new partnership would be coterminous with West Mercia's North Worcestershire Basic Command Unit and would reflect the local authority shared services ethos;
 - b) a reduction in the number of meetings that partnership Officers and statutory members are expected to attend;
 - c) pooling of expertise, knowledge, skills and resources to more effectively tackle crime and disorder; and
 - d) achieve enhanced local delivery by effectively using limited resources on a co-ordinated basis across the three districts.
- 3.25 Any structures, resources and working arrangements put in place will need to be judged on this basis. Officers are currently drafting the governance and working arrangements.

Way Forward

- 3.26 Home Office Ministers are clear that they see local partnership working as crucial, and that they do not wish to dictate local structures and mechanisms. Partnerships are free to arrange themselves according to local need and in order to facilitate this and the Home Office has simplified the process for merging CSPs down into three stages as follows:-

a) Stage 1

All Responsible Authorities across the areas wishing to merge must submit a joint application. Before this can be done they

will all need to agree to the merger and must also have consulted with their local stakeholders on the merits of the proposed merger.

b) Stage 2

The Home Office Community Safety Unit will consider the application submitted; if the application demonstrates that all partners are in favour of the merger and that it will be in the interests of reducing crime and disorder, combating misuse of drugs and / or reducing re-offending, the application will be forwarded to Ministers for approval.

c) Stage 3

If Ministerial approval is received the Home Office Community Safety Unit will inform the partnerships involved and liaise with Home Office Legal Advisers for an order to be raised. A copy of the order, showing the date on which the partnerships will be legally merged will be sent to the Partnership.

- 3.27 Once approval is confirmed then Lead Officers for community safety across North Worcestershire will facilitate the required process.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.28 A North Worcestershire CSP would provide the right strategic infrastructure and environment for supporting local implementation teams to deliver the vision of Bromsgrove “a safe place to live, work, visit and do business”.
- 3.29 There are no associated impacts to customers with the merge of Bromsgrove CSP.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

The main risks of *not* merging the CSPs are that partners may not be able to properly resource individual CSPs. The merged partnership will be coterminous with West Mercia Police area. Reducing the number of meetings that partners are expected to attend will enable Partners to dedicate more time to delivery. The future of community safety funding is uncertain. By pooling expertise, knowledge, skills and resources at a strategic level will support the continued delivery of initiatives to tackle crime and disorder in all the Council areas.

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5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Safer Communities Board - Future Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership arrangements.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Guidance on merging Community Safety Partnership Areas Under Section 5 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as Amended by Section 97(3) of the Police Reform Act 2002 and Section 108 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/csp-merger-guidance?view=Binary>.

7. KEY

CSPs - Community Safety Partnerships.
PCC - Police and Crime Commissioner.
NWCSP - North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership.
RCSP - Redditch Community Safety Partnership.
WFCSP - Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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