

Scrutiny Theme 3: Tackling disadvantage

Purpose of report

1. To outline how this objective is being addressed by the Partnership's work and seek the views of members.

Background

2. The Joint Scrutiny Committee will recall that they approved *Tackling Disadvantage* as the basis for the third of the three Scrutiny Themes identified at their meeting in September 2009. This included the following elements within the theme:
 - Reduce worklessness by improving access to education, skills & well-paid jobs
 - Improve housing affordability
 - Reduce unmet housing need
 - Invest in disadvantaged areas.
3. Members will remember that reducing worklessness and improving skills has already been considered as part of theme 2, *Strengthening the Sub-Regional Economy*. Clearly there are particular issues in geographical areas and with particular groups where worklessness is entrenched, but addressing these challenges will be integral to achieving the MAA outcomes and a core element of the work of the Skills and Competitiveness Board, both outlined in the last report.
4. Members also considered planning and housing issues to some extent as part of Theme 1: Ensuring a high quality sustainable environment.

Multi-Area Agreement (MAA)

5. The other key MAA outcome critical in tackling disadvantage is:
 - Plan and manage the growth in homes and jobs in order to build mixed and sustainable communities.
6. The MAA Delivery Plan sets out the more detailed objectives and actions adopted by the sub-region in relation to these outcomes. These are summarised in Appendix 1 and were discussed at the Joint Scrutiny Committee on 30 October.

Single Conversation

7. At its meeting on 19 February the Joint Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Single Conversation which focused on how the West of England Partnership is working with the four authorities and government agencies to bring investment to the sub-region and, in particular, to focus that investment on disadvantaged areas

and ensure that investment in affordable housing is included as part of the package agreed.

Tackling disadvantage through transport

8. The current Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) 2006 to 2011 recognises the importance of tackling the problems of getting around, making it easier to get to work, to college, to the local hospital or health centre. It is especially important for those in disadvantaged groups or areas. Fares often put the cost of journeys beyond the reach of low income groups. To this end the JLTP identified a range of Action Plans for tackling access to health and employment based on extensive consultation and use of the Accession mapping software.
9. The replacement Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP3) will build on this work through the Government's 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' (DaSTS) goal for Equality of Opportunity. The JLTP3 will aim to:
 - Improve accessibility for all residents to health services, employment, digital infrastructure and other local services;
 - Assist neighbourhood renewal and the regeneration of deprived areas;
 - Improve access to services for rural and remote area residents;
 - Provide a Disability Discrimination Act compliant transport network.
10. In keeping with this DaSTS objective, a key aspect of the sub-region's major transport schemes programme is to improve access to jobs and other services particularly by public transport – be it bus, Rapid Transit or rail. In addition a number of schemes in the programme, such as the South Bristol Link, have facilitating regeneration and improving accessibility at the heart of their objectives. Three of the six most advanced of these major schemes (Weston Package, South Bristol Link and North Fringe to Hengrove Package) seek to improve transport provision to and within the most deprived communities in the sub-region.

Local authority core functions that support and strengthen work at sub-regional level to tackle disadvantage

11. There are many ways that individual authorities work to tackle disadvantage as part of their core functions. These include:
 - Prioritising neighbourhoods which score highly against the government's Indices of Deprivation, particularly in focusing regeneration and renewal work;
 - Supporting voluntary, community and third sector, particularly in these areas and where their focus is on groups within the community which suffer particular disadvantage;
 - Addressing disadvantage through key services, such as education and social care;
 - Ensuring that those in greatest need are prioritised for social housing and to make affordable housing available;
 - Providing support to disabled people, people from black and minority ethnic communities and other disadvantaged groups to enable them to access council services.

Recommendation

That members note the report and give their views.

Appendix 1 MAA Actions:

Author: Sally Gregory, Policy Officer, West of England Partnership
Tel: 0117 903 6983; email: sally.gregory@westofengland.org

S:\WEP\WEP meetings\3. Joint Scrutiny Committee\2009-10\7. 05 March 10\Scrutiny Theme 3 - Tackling disadvantage.doc

MAA Actions:

Plan and manage the growth in homes and jobs in order to build mixed and sustainable communities

- (1) Conclude Core Strategies, as part of Local Development Frameworks (subject to the publication of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), and the outcome of any challenge by the authorities to the government's changes to the RSS)
- (2) Through the Single Conversation conclude the high-level, integrated Delivery & Investment Plan to support Core Strategies and Local Development Frameworks and the delivery of housing, employment and affordable/supported housing
- (3) Seek the endorsement of Communities and Local Government to:
 - the approach taken to the preparation of the Delivery & Investment Plan
 - the adoption of Joint Sub-Regional Development Trajectory in the Plan to assist best use of infrastructure, the delivery of mixed and sustainable communities and market recovery, in order to provide confidence to developers and discourage inappropriate development
- (4) Embody the Delivery and Investment Plan in a Joint Supplementary Planning Document to the RSS, to include it within the planning framework as a material consideration in making planning decisions
- (5) Conclude the re-negotiation of the targets for the following National Indicators:
 - NI 154: Net additional homes provided
 - NI 155: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross).