

## **EVALUATION OF OUR PERFORMANCE AS A PARTNER IN PARTNERSHIPS AND FORUMS 2008-2009**

As part of a drive to evaluate and improve our services this year we decided to survey both the users of our services (reported on separately) and also to see if we could get some judgment on our performance within those partnerships and forums on which Dorset Community Action is invited to sit as a representative body in its own right. To this end forms were sent out to a total of sixteen partnerships and replies were received from eight, representing a return rate of 50%.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The surveys were sent out to the chair of each partnership / forum with the exception of the two groups that are chaired by DCA itself. For these two the link officer kindly circulated forms to all the partners and then collated the results. It must be pointed out that in the other cases it is not known whether the chair consulted with other members of the partnership and hence whether these answers are a complete picture of how the partnership judges our performance. It is reasonable to expect however that the chair would have picked up any sense of great dissatisfaction or huge pleasure at how we were doing and reflected this in his / her response even if it did not accord with their own personal view.

In assessing the answers, each answer other than not applicable or don't know was assigned a value on a scale of 1 for highly effective to 5 for hopeless. The lowest score in any category was 4 (ineffective), given by one respondent in three categories, the highest score was 1 (highly effective) given by three respondents and covering every category at least once.

Overall we are judged to be moderately effective in terms of representation. In terms of speaking at meetings we are rated best at speaking out on behalf of the voluntary and community sector (overall score 1.57) although still effective in the other categories. When it comes into inputting into consultations however, our rating is between moderately effective and so-so and with a higher number of don't knows. As far as inputting into policy development is concerned, the overall results are almost identical to those for speaking at meetings with again our effectiveness rated highest for input on behalf of the voluntary and community sector.

Looked at another way, we appear to be at our most effective in representing the views of the voluntary and community sector where we are judged better than moderately effective (1.78). The results are very close for our effectiveness in representing the views of communities (1.90) but we are considered slightly weaker at advocating on rural issues (2.1).

There were a few suggestions on ways we could improve our effectiveness. These mainly centred on having a higher profile and being more proactive by showcasing good examples of work carried out by the Third Sector and making people more aware of what we were doing on issues that affect the sector.

There were several specific examples cited of where it was felt DCA had made a positive contribution and these included in its contribution to the Bridging Group and the Climate

Change Coalition, in supporting the partner organisation through the lifetime of the Local Area Agreement target, in the redraft of the Dorset Play Strategy 2007 and in supporting the Dorchester Car Club.

We offered practical support (chairing, secretariat etc) to three of the partnerships that replied with two rating the level of support as good and one as very good. Our follow-up on practical issues received the same rating, although an additional respondent who had ticked no to the question 'Does DCA offer any practical support?' then rated us as good on follow-up on practical issues!

### **CONCLUSION**

This is clearly a rather small sample and with only sixteen partnerships to question it is obvious that the answers can be slightly skewed by just one or two disgruntled or over enthusiastic respondents. With this caveat the evidence presented here is that we are judged reasonably good at this role but probably need to be more vocal both in our support of the sector and in telling the sector about our support.