

Resources and Performance Panel

Briefing Paper Panel Meeting 9 February 2006

1. Purpose of Briefing

- 1.1 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has released a consultation paper; Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping the Future. The consultation period is the 8th December 2006 to the 3rd of March 2006.
- 1.2 The proposals in the consultation signal a major step forward in the development of Local Strategic Partnerships which links with the developing Local Area Agreement which the Panel reviewed the development of in Autumn last year.
- 1.3 A draft Council response is being developed that will be reported to the Cabinet on the 1 March and the Panels views from this meeting will be fed into that draft. Of particular interest in terms of the Council response are issues relating to the role of the Council and Elected members.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Panel consider the questions in the paper and in particular any issues that they would like to see included in the Council's response to the consultation.

3. Consultation Summary

- 3.1 The consultation examines the future role of Local Strategic Partnerships, their governance and accountability, and the increasing importance of their capacity to deliver Sustainable Community Strategies. It poses a series of questions under these four headings, to aid understanding of how they are operating at present, and how changes could be made locally, regionally and nationally in order for them to continue developing efficiently.
- 3.2 The ODPM sees the role of LSPs:
 - 1) To be the Partnership of Partnerships in an area, providing the strategic co-ordination within the area and linking with other plans and bodies established at the regional and sub-regional and local level.
 - 2) To ensure a Sustainable Community Strategy is produced that sets the vision and priorities for the area agreed by all parties, including local citizens and businesses, and founded on a solid evidence base
 - 3) To develop and drive the effective delivery of their LAA
 - 4) To agree an action plan for achieving the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities, including the LAA outcomes.
- 3.3 The first of the four broad headlines focuses on **the role of LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies**. The sub-headings that the consultation paper explores are:
 - The strategic leadership role of LSPs
 - The move to Sustainable Community Strategies
 - The links between the regional and sub-regional tiers

- The roles of LSPs in two-tier authority areas
- Neighbourhood engagement – the impact of the LAA

This area prompts discussion on topics such as the key role of the LSP; should it be to develop the vision for the local area, through the Sustainable Community Strategy and the 'delivery contract' through the LAA. Prompting questions as to how regional / sub-regional engagement exists at the moment, and what can be done to further its role

- 3.4 Chapter two focuses on **Governance**: central government regards the key feature of LSPs is their ability to work as the overarching partnership in a locality which brings together all local thematic partnerships. Therefore each LSP needs effective, accepted and transparent governance arrangements. The chapter explores the following issues in full:

- Governance of the LSP: in particular, the relationship between the LSP with other thematic partnerships and the role of the executive board
- Geographic boundaries of partners
- Ways of ensuring wide representation
- A possible legislative foundation

The discussion topics it focuses on are to do with working together as the partnership of partnerships,

- 3.5 Chapter three refers to **Accountability**. The consultation supports the belief that for LSPs to be effective and agree local priorities and actions that improve local services, all parties need to be clear what is expected of them and deliver relevant actions. The chapter explores the following in more detail:

- The accountability of the local authority and between partners
- Accountability upward to central government and between the partners themselves
- Accountability to citizens, including the role of elected politicians both local councillors and MPs and the role of scrutiny of partnerships

Areas for response are those to do with producing protocols or 'partnership agreements' between partners to ensure clear lines of accountability for the delivery of agreed outcomes. It questions what the key roles are for executive councillors within LSPs, what are appropriate roles for backbenchers and Members of Parliament, whether their roles are complementary to the role of local councillors. It also questions ways to involve communities and ensure all sections of the community are involved in shaping local priorities and public services.

Of particular interest to the panel might be the section on Overview and Scrutiny which says this:

“Role of Overview and Scrutiny

125. The current Community Strategy guidance also explains in depth the wide role that overview and scrutiny committees have: *“Overview and scrutiny committees have an invaluable role to play in working with the executive (in councils operating executive arrangements) and the council to identify community needs and initiatives. This role could involve scrutinising the stated plans and priorities of the council(s) and other provider agencies, commenting on the results of local consultation, and initiating audits of resources to meet expressed needs. They may also wish to play a role in evaluating the strategy as it develops, for example against sustainable development criteria.”* This role has the potential to extend therefore to scrutinising the four blocks of the LAA because they set out the outcomes for delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy. Councillors, however, have limited powers to require partners other than the local authority and health to attend and recognise their recommendations. It may be useful to extend this to other sectors. There is also potential for the neighbourhood/parish sector to have wider involvement in overview and scrutiny where their local knowledge, could be of benefit.”

- 3.6 Finally the fourth chapter explores **Capacity Issues**. The topic examines the importance of skill base. It helps explore areas that need further development to improve learning and support.

- The skills needed by LSPs
- Financial resources available to LSPs
- Existing training and other support

The consultation paper recommends establishing what the key support areas are, or skill gaps in the LSP, identifying if extra support or alternative support would be helpful in moving to a more delivery focused role.

Further recommendations focus on how information and support is approached: is there a preference to how information or support is received. Adequate learning and support provision needs to be ensured to enable to build the capacity of communities to engage with the LSP and its partners at various levels.

Appendix 1

The role of LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies LSPs, Sustainable Community Strategies and LAAs.

1. Do you agree that the key role of the LSP should be to develop the vision for the local area, through the Sustainable Community Strategy and the 'delivery contract' through the LAA.

Regional/Sub-regional engagement

2. We believe it is important that LSPs reflect regional/sub-regional plans where relevant in their Sustainable Community Strategy priorities and that regional organisations and partnerships take account of key local needs. How can this greater co-ordination best be facilitated?

Links to local plans.

3. Would a requirement on bodies producing theme or service-based plans to 'have regard' to the Sustainable Community Strategy in doing so and vice versa, increase the LSP's ability to take the over-arching view in an area?

Sustainable Community Strategies

4. Are the proposed steps in the development of a Sustainable Community Strategy correct?
5. What more could be done to ensure Sustainable community Strategies are better able to make the links between social, economic and environmental goals and to deal more effectively with the area's cross-boundary and longer-term impacts?

Neighbourhood Engagement

6. What should be the role of the LSP in supporting neighbourhood engagement and ensuring the neighbourhood / parish voice, including diverse and minority communities, is heard at the principal local level?
7. In two-tier areas, is it most appropriate for the responsibility for neighbourhood engagement to rest with the district level LSP?

Links with Local Developmental Framework

8. How can spatial planning teams best contribute to Sustainable Community Strategies through the LSP and ensure that LDFs and Sustainable Community Strategies are closely linked?
9. How could revised guidance and accompanying support materials best ensure that Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks join up effectively?

Two-tier Areas

10. Should every local authority area have its own LSP?
11. Would the establishment of a greater delineation of roles between country and district LSPs as suggested be sensible?

Governance of LSPs

LSP as the partnership of partnerships

12. We believe that it is important that the LSP is made up of the thematic partnerships in the area together with an LSP board. What is your view?
13. We believe that a rationalisation of local partnerships would help the LSP executive take an effective overview. Would clustering partnerships around the four LAA blocks be a sensible way to achieve this?
14. We believe that the geographic boundaries of partners within LSPs is important. What do you see as the opportunities for, and barriers to, co-terminosity shared geographic boundaries?
15. Within the LSP framework and its established priorities, would the creation of single delivery vehicles to tackle particular issues be helpful?

Ensuring wide representation

16. How can the neighbourhood and parish, tiers be involved most effectively on the LSP on a) the executive and b) individual thematic partnerships?
17. How can the private, voluntary and community sectors be involved most effectively on the LSP as a) the executive and b) individual thematic partnerships?

Providing a legislative foundation

18. Would a duty to co-operate with the local authority, in producing and implementing the Community Strategy, help to set LSPs on a firmer footing and better enable their enhanced delivery co-ordination role?
19. If so, what obligations, such as attendance, financial or staff support, would be useful to place on partners?
20. If so, which public sector agencies would the duty be most sensibly placed on?
21. Should there be a statutory duty on local authorities and named partners to promote the engagement of the voluntary and community sectors in the LSP?

Accountability

Accountability between partners

22. Should each partnership be encouraged to produce protocols or 'partnership agreements' between partners to ensure clear lines of accountability for the delivery of agreed outcomes?
23. We believe that if partnership working was included as part of other key agencies' assessments it would be effective in securing greater commitment from other public sector agencies. What are your views?

Involvement of local councillors

24. What do you see as the key role for executive councillors within LSPs?

25. What do you see as the appropriate role for backbenchers particularly in ensuring a high quality of local engagement?
26. What would make councillors' powers of overview and scrutiny more effective in scrutinising the four blocks of the LAA?

Involvement of Members of Parliament

27. What would be the most appropriate way for a Member of Parliament to be involved with the LSP and how can we ensure that it is complementary to the role of local councillors?
28. How can we promote effective community engagement and involvement, from all sections of the community in shaping local priorities and public services?
29. How can we maximise the opportunities for joint policy and joint activity on community engagement, including the LD, the LAA and the Sustainable Community Strategy?
30. How can accountability to local people and businesses be enhanced?

Capacity

31. What are your LSP's key support / skill gaps?
32. What extra of different support would be most helpful in shifting to a more delivery focused role?
33. How would LSPs prefer to receive information and support; through guidance, toolkits, sign-posting to existing information, practical learning opportunities etc?
34. How can LSPs ensure that adequate learning and support provision is available to build the capacity of communities to engage with the LSP and its partners at the various levels?
35. What learning or development do you feel is required by LSPs in order to deliver sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level?