

Report of	Meeting	Date
Head of Corporate and Policy Services	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2 March 2006

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS: SHAPING THEIR FUTURE – A CONSULTATION PAPER

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To inform members of the consultation paper which raises a number of specific questions in relation to the future role of LSP's and to suggest how this Council should respond to the paper.
- Formal responses to the consultation paper are required by the 3rd March 2006.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- Within the Council's draft Corporate Strategy 2006-2009 the Council has identified an outcome of becoming an excellent community leader. To achieve this we need to demonstrate a renewed commitment to the LSP and work with partners to deliver the Community Strategy aspirations and make a difference for the Chorley community.

RISK ISSUES

- The issues raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following category:

Strategy	•	Information	
Reputation	•	Regulatory/Legal	•
Financial		Operational	
People		Other	

- The Council is recognised as 'community leader' in promoting the economic, environmental and social well being of the Borough and consequently has the lead role to play in ensuring the development and implementation of the Community Strategy and Action Plan. It currently takes the lead role in co-ordinating the work of the Local Strategic Partnership and could ultimately become the 'accountable body' for the LSP. The Council will clearly need to deliver the actions where it appears as the 'lead partner' but also to performance manage and report on the progress of other agencies.

BACKGROUND

- Local services are increasingly being delivered in partnership – with local authorities working with other public sector agencies, businesses, and the voluntary and community sectors. Local Strategic Partnerships are the vehicle for this way of working. The future role of LSPs is central to the Government's vision for the future of local decision making,

in particular to developing a strong leadership role for local authorities. LSP's also provide an important opportunity for realising better quality neighbourhood engagement and bringing together the resulting neighbourhood agenda.

7. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Community Strategies were introduced as a result of the Local Government Act 2000. Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to produce a Community Strategy to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas. Statutory guidance on Community Strategies formally introduced the concept of LSPs and placed an expectation on local authorities to seek the participation of local stakeholders in this process and set up an LSP where possible.
8. Four main issues are discussed in the consultation paper:
 - The role of LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies (Chapter 1)
 - Governance (Chapter 2)
 - Accountability (Chapter 3)
 - Capacity Issues (Chapter 4)

Chapter 1

9. The main objective of LSP's is to set out the vision of an area and co-ordinate and drive the delivery of local services leading to improved outcomes for citizens that go beyond the remit of one partner. LSPs are described as voluntary, non executive partnerships. The 88 areas in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding were required to have a LSP before they could receive NRF.
10. Prior to the development of Local Area Agreement's, the role of LSPs in non-NRF areas was primarily developing a vision for their locality through their Community Strategy. Increasing, LSPs are moving towards a delivery co-ordination role in particular through the development and delivery of Local Area Agreements.
11. It is proposed that LSPs should:
 - Be the 'partnership of partnerships';
 - Develop Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) based on solid evidence which would be refreshed annually and reviewed every three years and be influenced by local, regional and sub regional issues;
 - Develop and drive the effective delivery of their LAA; and
 - To produce an action plan which combines the Community Strategy action plan and the LAA action plan.
12. LSPs will have an important role in supporting neighbourhood engagement and ensuring that neighbourhoods can influence strategic local priorities. It is envisaged that they will play an important role in supporting neighbourhood engagement, listening to the views of the neighbourhoods in a locality, and ensuring that neighbourhoods can influence wider priorities in service delivery and the allocation resources. Parish councils will play an important role in making links to specific neighbourhoods.
13. The Local Development Framework (LDF) provides the spatial expression to a Community Strategy and must be a key component in the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
14. The roles of LSPs in two tier authorities need to be clearly defined. The LSP evaluation programme found three ways of working to date:

- Aggregation model – where district level Community Strategies are aggregated to form an overarching strategy, at county level;
 - Added value model – county Community Strategy focuses on areas where it can add value to district strategies – creating more strategic focus, avoiding duplication and with an emphasis on sub regional issues; and
 - Separatist model – where the county strategy has been developed with few linkages and in isolation to district strategies.
15. The paper suggests that a possible model in two tier authorities could be to develop a strategic Sustainable Community Strategy at county level, with a remit to engage with the regional, sub regional tier and district authorities/LSPs to reflect their priorities. District level LSPs could then focus on local/neighbourhood engagement and establishing an analysis of the needs of their population. There is evidence of a similar structure being established in unitary areas with local area partnerships for specific parts of the authority working within the strategic overview of the LSP. This model is based upon a presumption that each local authority should have its own LSP which can determine the specific priorities for that area.

Chapter 2

16. The local authority's involvement is vital to the effective operation of an LSP, the local authority is also responsible for producing the Sustainable Community Strategy and is accountable for the LSPs actions. The local authority is also the accountable body for the LAA.
17. The basic structure of an LSP should include some form of executive board under pinned by local thematic partnerships and perhaps focused around the four LAA blocks. The executive should be made up of all the key interests in an area: elected representatives, the local authority Chief Executive, senior public sector officials, voluntary, community and business sector. The lead members from the thematic partnerships would be expected to be represented on the Executive.
18. Local Public Service Boards focus on bringing together the major public sector partners in the locality, to map and influence the totality of public expenditure and to co-ordinate joined up public service delivery. In many ways LPSBs have the same role as the LSP executive board but tend to have less broad representation. LPSBs should be set up within the LSP rather than as a rival to it.
19. As all LSPs begin to move towards a greater delivery co-ordination role, it is important to consider whether to set them on a firmer footing by clarifying and formalising their role by imposing a 'duty to co-operate' on the key public service agencies.

Chapter 3

20. The LSP is accountable vertically to Government through delivery of the LAA and horizontally to local people through the democratic process through the local authority executive, as ultimate responsibility for the LSPs actions rest here. The Overview and Scrutiny role of backbencher ward councillors also has a clear role in scrutinising the stated plans and priorities of the council and other agencies, commenting on the results of local consultation, and initiating audits of resources to meet expressed needs.
21. Each partner within the LSP is responsible for the actions they agree to undertake, and as such are accountable for the delivery of those actions to the LSP, to their parent organisation and to the local community.

22. Performance Management Frameworks are seen as central to the delivery of Community Strategy Action Plans and the LAA.

Chapter 4

23. As LSPs are becoming more focused on delivery of outcomes, the skills needed to develop and maintain effective LSPs have developed. LSPs now also need skills in performance management, planning, data collection, analysis and use of evidence and evaluation. Influencing and collaboration skills are also vital in ensuring strong, effective leadership by the LSP. LSPs need to develop the skills to ensure that this happens.
24. LSPs will be expected to be supported by partners within existing budgets as partnership working should be a more efficient way of delivering outcomes.
25. Actions agreed by the LSP should be resourced 'up front' to ease the burden on any one agency that would be traditionally be expected to fund the action.

DRAFT RESPONSES TO KEY QUESTIONS

Key Questions – 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*

A: The proposed key role of the LSP is favoured. Extensive work has been undertaken to ensure that the LAA fully reflects the priorities of Chorley Borough's Community Strategy and combining the Community Strategy Action Plan and the relevant parts of the LAA Action Plan would seem a sensible approach.

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?*

A: This greater co-ordination could be achieved by discussion between LSPs and relevant organisations and subsequent development of agreements covering the relevant processes. The Government could assist this process by requiring that consultation processes be formalised with respect to LSPs being consulted on Regional and Sub regional Strategies and facilitate the achievement of consistency between these Strategies and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

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?*

A: A local LSP is able to take an overarching view in an area based on detailed profiling information and comprehensive community consultation. In this respect the suggested requirement would add little. The requirement on bodies to 'have regard' to the Sustainable Community Strategy when producing their own plans could potentially improve the existing levels of alignment with Community Strategies but this would depend on the precise nature of this requirement and its status. The need to provide partners at a local level with greater

flexibility (to be less tied to national targets) is more significant in achieving alignment with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Sustainable Community Strategies

4: *Are the proposed steps in the development of a Sustainable Community Strategy correct?*

A: Step 6 perhaps needs altering to say that it is the Sustainable Community Strategy Action Plan which should be refreshed annually in line with the annual refresh of the LAA Action Plan and not the Sustainable Community Strategy. A Strategy represents a long term vision and while this will not remain static an annual refresh may not be appropriate. The distinction between strategy and action plan is significant.

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?*

A: Providing partners with more flexibility to work together at a local level by reducing the number of national government set targets and initiatives. Also by LSPs working more closely at a sub regional level.

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?*

A: LSP's should have the key role. With a range of agencies pursuing engagement and consultation initiatives co-ordination and co-operation is vital. The LSP should ensure that it provides consistent mechanisms for local communities to participate in the neighbourhood management schemes/arrangements and for local communities to influence the development and review of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The involvement of parish councils is a key factor in making the links to local neighbourhoods.

7: *In two-tier areas, is it most appropriate for the responsibility for neighbourhood engagement to rest with the district level LSP?*

A: Yes, district level LSPs are best placed to support the development of neighbourhood engagement, since they comprise partners operating at a local level with close links to neighbourhoods. This doesn't suggest that district level LSP's shouldn't retain a strategic role as implied in the consultation document.

Links with Local Development Framework (LDF)

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?*

A: At a district level. In Chorley we have been successful in establishing close links through a Community Strategy/LDF members working group. The preparation of both documents has been closely aligned.

9: *How could revised guidance and accompanying support materials best ensure that Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks join up effectively?*

A: The revised guidance would need to allow flexibility since both Sustainable Community Strategies and LDFs also need to link with many other plans, priorities and timescales. Also, LDFs have a different statutory basis to that of Sustainable Community Strategies.

Two-tier areas

10: *Should every local authority area have its own LSP?*

A: Yes. Each local authority area has distinct needs and priorities which need to be reflected in any overarching vision and supporting strategy. Merging LSP's means that one areas priorities might be lost.

11: *Would the establishment of a greater delineation of roles between County and District LSPs as suggested be sensible?*

A: A greater delineation of roles would be welcome. We would suggest the preparation of SCS's at District level with the County LSP role being a combination of the 'aggregation' and 'added value' roles above.

Key Questions – 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?*

A: Government should not be prescriptive about the exact structure of LSPs and this should be decided locally. The proposed new structure of the Chorley Partnership partly reflects the basic LSP governance structure as it has a Board, Executive and some thematic partnerships (though not fully reflective of the four LAA blocks). We also strongly believe in the idea of a Local Public Service Board. A large amount of public sector money is spent in local areas and there is potentially tremendous benefit to mapping this and seeking to more closely align it behind SCS priorities. A LPSB also provides a forum to discuss opportunities for joint working, service provision, procurement, etc.

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?*

A: Clustering partnerships around the shared local/national priorities would be more helpful. Some of the linkages within LAA blocks are contrived, e.g. Healthier communities and older people.

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?*

A: Boundaries while important do not always present barriers and there are many examples of cross boundary working at a local level. This question perhaps highlights the point that current consultation on LSP's and CDRP's is out of line with the local government review, future PCT structures, police force mergers, Fire Service restructuring, etc. We would suggest that these should be better aligned.

15: *Within the LSP framework and its established priorities, would the creation of single delivery vehicle to tackle particular issues be helpful?*

A: What matters is what works. This could possibly be helpful but it should be voluntary and be decided locally as to whether this is pursued. It would also need to be accountable to the LSP.

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?*

A: This in part relates to question 6. The key is a co-ordinated and successful approach to neighbourhood engagement. If this is in place neighbourhood and parish tiers will be effectively involved. Local circumstance will dictate the best model for this. On the Executive we would suggest a representative from an 'umbrella organisation'. A similar approach would be appropriate to thematic partnerships. In terms of Parish Councils a robust Parish Plan is important to feed into the SCS preparation process.

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.*

A: As for 16 above.

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?*

A: The proposed 'duty to co-operate' may be helpful and clarify responsibilities although it does not necessarily ensure effective engagement. There will be experience from CDRP's which can be drawn on here.

19: *If so, what obligations, such as attendance, financial or staff support, would be useful to place on partners?*

A: The key is that people want to be there, not made to be there. There needs to be a reason for attending – better outcomes for local people. Within local LSP structures there should be the opportunity for challenge. Future inspection arrangements, across the board, might consider contribution to SCS priorities? Currently agencies are supportive of SCS targets but feel limited to contribute as they are already tied to achievement of national targets and almost feel that the community strategy is a distraction to their day job.

20: *If so, which public sector agencies would the duty be most sensibly placed on?*

A: Most public sector agencies are already contributing they simply need less national prescription. Again we would suggest a local LPSB as a key development.

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?*

A: The Local Compact aims to ensure effective engagement of the voluntary and community sectors in the LSP already. It is not, therefore, necessary to place a statutory duty. There are issues for the voluntary, community and faith sectors in having the capacity to engage as is often expected of them.

Key Questions

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?*

A: There may be some value in producing partnership agreements, but only if they are kept very short and specific. Key lines of accountability are crucial.

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?*

A: This would secure greater commitment.

Involvement of local councillors

24: *What do you see as the key role for Executive Councillors within LSPs?*

A: Decision makers. To have the authority to commit the Council to a project/initiative/course of action. Also, to communicate the work of the LSP with non – Executive Councillors.

25: *What do you see as the appropriate role for backbenchers particularly in ensuring a high quality of local engagement?*

A: Participation in preparation of the SCS by feeding in views from the local community. Holding the Executive and other partners to account.

26: *What would make Councillors' powers of overview and scrutiny more effective in scrutinising the 4 blocks of the LAA?*

A: A District level LAA built around our community strategy priority outcomes! Our Councillors will be more interested in monitoring progress against our community strategy (which to some extent incorporates LAA). Many partners do not see themselves as accountable to councillors, for example the Police are accountable to the Police Authority. Something that makes partners feel they are accountable to Councillors would help. Scrutiny Committee could have an important role in challenging actions and policy development provided partners accept this role.

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?*

A: Our Member of Parliament currently has a seat on the LSP. They can relay local priorities/concerns to sub-regional/regional bodies, GONW and government departments as appropriate. Can also assist in holding partners to account..

Involvement of Communities Served

28: *How can we promote effective community engagement and involvement, from all sections of the community, in shaping local priorities and public services?*

A: This approach needs to be decided locally.

29: *How can we maximise the opportunities for joint policy and joint activity on community engagement, including the LDF, the LAA and Sustainable Community Strategy?*

A: Again a locally determined approach would be best. Government can assist by ensuring that the relevant guidance facilitates a consistent approach by the LSP and the partner organisations responsible for producing and delivering these documents.

30: *How can accountability to local people and businesses be enhanced?*

A: Greater transparency of LSP activity and a better O&S function.

Key Questions

31: *What are your LSPs key support / skill gaps?*

A: Performance management is growing in importance for the Chorley Partnership. Chorley Borough's Corporate Strategy target of achieving 'Green status' for the LSP by March 2009 will require a detailed baseline to be prepared. Help and support to achieve this would be of most benefit.

32: *What extra or different support would be most helpful in shifting to a more delivery focussed role?*

A: As 31. Support in mapping public sector expenditure as part of setting up an LPSB would also help.

33: *How would LSPs prefer to receive information and support; through guidance, toolkits, sign-posting to existing information, practical learning opportunities etc?*

A: A mixture of the above.

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?*

A: This will vary on circumstance but needs to be considered as part of developing a consistent and co-ordinated approach.

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?*

A: Further development of strong community leadership, relationships and defining of roles supported by provision of appropriate materials for use by the LSP.

CONCLUSION

26. Local Strategic Partnerships are increasingly playing a major role in the delivery of local services. Whilst the discussion in the consultation paper around roles of LSPs in two tier authorities may seem untimely, given the current debate around unitary status, it is important that we address at least some of the other issues including 'duty to co-operate' and local authorities being the 'accountable body' for the LSP.
27. The future role of LSPs will be defined in a Local Government White Paper later this year. In addition, draft and final guidance will be released on producing Sustainable Community Strategies later in the Autumn.

COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

28. This report has no apparent HR implications.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

29. At present there are no financial implications associated with this piece of work. There may be legal implications if the 'duty to cooperate' with the local authority was introduced and the local authority was required to act upon it.

RECOMMENDATION

30. To consider the report and the draft responses contained under each question raised in the consultation paper.

31. To gain agreement that these draft responses can be submitted to the ODPM on 3 March 2006.

TIM RIGNALL
HEAD OF CORPORATE AND POLICY SERVICES

There are no background papers to this report.

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