

## 12. **SSDC Partnerships Review**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide an opportunity for the Area North Committee to review the findings of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, which was charged with reviewing all SSDC partnerships, and to consider any implications relevant to Area North, of the recommendations arising from this review.

This report will be presented by the Area Development Manager (North), as lead officer for the partnerships reviewed for Area North.

### **Public Interest**

SSDC works in partnership with a range of organisations, to co-ordinate activity, deliver services and, where possible, work more efficiently to tackle issues, which are relevant to more than one organisation. We maintain a Partnerships Register, which records information about each partnership and ensures they are regularly reviewed. In 2010, the Scrutiny Committee was asked to take a more detailed look at each partnership, with the aim of coming up with proposals to rationalise the number of partnerships, and improve governance and other arrangements for those remaining on the register.

### **Recommendation**

That Area North Committee recommend to District Executive that:

- Somerset Levels and Moors Local Action for Rural Communities be retained on the SSDC partnerships register.
- That the Langport Abattoir Liaison Group, Links Community Transport Steering Group and Martock Youth Project be removed from the partnerships register.

### **Background**

The original drivers for this review came from the Audit Commission, who set a requirement that SSDC maintained a Partnerships Register and regularly reviewed the governance arrangements for each partnership. In addition, SSDC's own Corporate Plan commits us to reviewing all partnerships to ensure they are effective and fit for purpose.

In June 2010, Scrutiny Committee established a Task & Finish Group to examine all 37 partnerships on the SSDC Partnerships Register. It agreed a template, which included details on each partnership including costs, officer time, outcomes achieved, governance

arrangements etc. Managers responsible for each partnership completed the template and presented the facts to the Task & Finish Group. All 37 partnerships on the register were assessed over the course of 6 meetings and the conclusions were presented to and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee in March 2011.

The Scrutiny recommendations were then considered by District Executive in April 2011. The District Executive agreed that any 'area' implications of the report should be considered by the relevant Area Committee in July, before any further consideration by District Executive.

This report therefore focuses on the partnerships relevant to Area North and the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee regarding these partnerships.

## **Review findings**

The full report as approved by the Scrutiny Committee, including assessment of each partnership, was presented to District Executive in April 2011.

Based on data presented by each of the managers, the review established that:

SSDC directly contributes approximately £4.3m per year to partnerships and the total number of officer and member hours spent on attending partnership meetings and their associated sub groups are approximately 4,700 hours per year.

The Scrutiny Committee recommended that the following definition of a partnership should be adopted at SSDC:

***A partnership is a formal working arrangement involving one or more independent bodies, from any sector, who pool resources and share responsibility for agreeing and then delivering a set of planned actions and outcomes. A formal agreement is made by all partners to work together for specific outcomes.***

Taken all together the recommendations of the review will help the Council to simplify the Partnership Register and test the soundness of the overall partnership arrangements. These recommendations need to be looked at in more detail on a partnership-by-partnership basis by the relevant Area Committee and Lead Officer and consideration given to how any proposed changes can be implemented.

Since the review was commissioned, however, the wider environments in which we and our partnerships operate, have changed considerably:

- Many quangos and sub regional structures have been, or are being dismantled;
- New sub regional partnerships are being formed, most notable are the private sector led Local Enterprise Partnership and the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Partnership;
- There is less prescription around partnership arrangements and the cross agency targets required;
- Funding that went with these requirements has been removed, un-ringfenced or substantially cut (e.g. the scrapping of the LAA (Local Area Agreement))
- Virtually all public sector bodies have been asked to cut their budgets at levels unprecedented in modern times

Overall the partnerships landscape has changed significantly, in a very short time and is still not fully in place, as the coalition government continues to shift the focus away from

top down structures. It is also placing stronger emphasis on local community groups taking action to tackle issues in their own communities.

### **Area North – Partnerships Reviewed**

Appendix A outlines the 4 partnerships reviewed by the Scrutiny Task & Finish Group and their detailed recommendations. The potential implications, if Area North Committee agrees with the Scrutiny recommendations, are outlined below:

- **Somerset Levels & Moors Local Action for Rural Communities** – Scrutiny Committee recognised this as an effective partnership that benefits communities in Area North and should be retained on the Partnerships Register. There is no SSDC direct financial contribution although an officer and Member sit on the Executive Group.
- **Langport Abattoir Liaison Group** – Scrutiny Committee do not consider this forum to be a partnership and recommend it should be removed from the Partnerships Register. The requirement for the group should continued to be monitored to ensure SSDC use of officer time is appropriate to the issues under consideration.
- **Links Community Transport Steering Group** – SSDC involvement in this project is managed through a Service Level Agreement monitored by Area North Committee and is therefore not a partnership and should be removed from the Partnerships Register. Any future funding requests should be considered by Area North Committee (as now)
- **Martock Youth Project** - this is a grant-based Service Level Agreement monitored by Area North Committee and is therefore not a partnership and should be removed from the Partnerships Register. Any future funding requests should be considered by Area North Committee (as now)

### **Financial Implications**

None at this stage.

### **Corporate Priority Implications:-**

Theme 5 – Deliver well managed cost effective services managed by our customers  
5.4 Deliver additional savings through partnership working within and without South Somerset - 0.5% each year.

### **Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)**

None

#### **Background Papers:**

*Scrutiny Agendas & Minutes June 2010*  
*Scrutiny Agendas & Minutes March 2011*  
*Detailed submissions from managers and notes of each Task & Finish Review group meeting, Sept 2010 – Feb 2011*  
*District Executive Agenda & Minutes April 2011*