

Scrutiny Committee – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2007

## 11. Scoping the LSP Annual Report to the Scrutiny Committee

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### Purpose of the Report

The Scrutiny Committee receives an Annual report from the South Somerset Local Strategic Partnership – South Somerset Together.

For 2007, the report is scheduled to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee in August. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to discuss what issues / points / questions they would like to see addressed in the Annual LSP Report.

### Action Required

Scrutiny Committee members are asked to agree the scope for the Annual LSP report to the Scrutiny Committee, using the background information contained in this report.

### Background

Local Strategic Partnerships play an important role in local democracy. Each year a report is submitted to the Scrutiny Committee, updating members on progress made to date and future objectives.

This is the first year that Scrutiny Committee members have had the opportunity to actively discuss and agree the content of this annual report.

This paper provides a basic introduction to the various structures and arrangements which surround the operation of the Local Strategic Partnership.

There are also some suggested questions which members may wish to consider whilst agreeing the scope of the Annual LSP report.

### Why scope the report?

It is important that the work of the Scrutiny function is focused and has clear aims and objectives. The Annual LSP report to the Scrutiny Committee is your opportunity to discuss the LSP in detail with lead officers and members.

In order to make the most of this opportunity, it is essential to carry out this scoping exercise, where members of the committee will agree the key questions they would like the annual report to address. This does mean that members will not be able to ask further questions at the meeting in August but it does allow for members and officers to effectively prepare for the meeting.

### What is the Local Strategic Partnership?

- A Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is a single, multi-agency body that matches the council's boundaries.

- LSPs aim to bring together local representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.
- The Council generally takes a lead role but should encourage the active engagement of others.
- Where there are County and District Councils (Two Tier government) there are a number of possible LSP arrangements, but usually there is some kind of LSP at both the District and County level.
- An LSP is not required by law but has been required to obtain certain types of funding.
- LSPs are a key player in the development and delivery of Local Area Agreements (LAA) which are explained later.
- Generally, LSPs are not executive bodies but provide a framework for liaison, co-ordination and the agreement of priorities for the locality without having many staff or large budgets of their own.
- Frequently, an LSP will have a number of sub-partnerships covering issues such as crime and disorder, the environment etc. There is often a board and a wider membership which meets less regularly.
  - **Sub Partnerships**
    - There is a local choice about arrangements for LSPs but most LSPs have a set of sub-partnerships, some of which are required by law such as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
    - Sub-partnerships which are not required by law include culture, environment, older people, health, economic development, neighbourhood renewal and transport.
    - Some LSPs are structured around the four Local Area Agreement blocks of;
      - Safer and Stronger Communities
      - Children and Young People
      - Healthier Communities
      - Economic Development and Enterprise

There is no requirement to be structured in this way.

## Key Strategies and Performance Agreements

Below are a few of the documents you may hear being referred to in LSP discussions.

Strategy	Statutory Base
Sustainable Community Strategy	Local Government Bill 2000 (likely to be developed under the reams of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2006)
Local Area Agreement	Non-statutory (statutory requirements are likely to be developed by Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2006)
Local Public Service Agreement	Non-statutory – now being superseded by Local Area Agreements
Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy	Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Police and Justice Act 2006

### What is a Community Strategy?

- A Community Strategy sets out the long-term visions for a council-wide area and is backed up with action plans that show how the Community Strategy will be implemented.
- Every Local authority should prepare a community strategy for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of its area and contributing to national sustainable development. This is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2000 and is now often referred to as a **Sustainable Community Strategy**.
- The Council should approve the final strategy but its development should involve widespread community consultation and engagement.
- The **LSP** should be involved in developing and approving the strategy – this ensures that organisations and agencies outside of local government can be actively involved in agreeing the way forward for the area.
- The Sustainable Community Strategy should provide a framework which pulls together more issued based strategies such as environment or Crime and Disorder. The LAA is becoming increasingly important in implementing the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- The Sustainable Community Strategy Action plans should be monitored and problems tackled as and when they arise.
- The Sustainable Community Strategy should clearly relate to the Local Development Plan – a strategy for spatial development and land use planning.
- The 2006 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill sets out proposals to integrate the consultation requirements of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Development Plan. The place shaping role of local councils

emphasised by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, will make it all the more important to have good integration of the areas key strategies.

### What is a Local Area Agreement?

- Local Area Agreements (LAA's) are three year, negotiated agreements between an upper tier council and Whitehall departments. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill sets out a new legal framework for LAA's. LAA's are likely to be increasingly important to LSP's.
- Currently, an LAA sets out a series of targets and the funding government will pay to achieve these targets. An LAA also includes 'enabling measures', which are changes central government agrees for a particular area to help it meet its targets. Some targets are known as 'Stretch Targets' which attract additional funding if the local area can deliver them.
- LAA's should reflect national targets negotiated with Central Government as well as local targets as defined by the Sustainable Community Strategy. Central funding can be used to deliver both national and local targets.
- Although LAAs are an agreement with the upper tier authority, it is expected that negotiation, ownership and delivery of the LAA will lie with the Local Strategic Partnership and in two tier areas will include all the districts.
- Targets and funding streams are divided into four streams;
  - Safer and Stronger Communities
  - Children and Young People
  - Healthier Communities and older people
  - Economic Development and Enterprise
- Local Areas are required to have a system to deliver performance management and financial accountability for the LAA. This system should be agreed locally but approved by the regional government office.
- Whilst LAA's aim to put national objectives into practice locally, primarily they should be a means of developing and delivering on local priorities as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

### 2 Tier LAA's

- Many two tier areas have found LAAs difficult to implement. Although many County and District Councils regularly work in partnership to deliver local priorities, the large number of LSP partners involved in bringing together all the Councils in a county area can make deciding priorities difficult.
- There can also be difficulties with implementation because Council's operate with different performance management cycles and systems.
- There are also issues around the distribution of reward money when stretch targets have been achieved.

## Central / local relations

- It can be difficult to ensure that local priorities are not lost amongst the national LAA targets. All the mandatory national targets have funding attached (apart from one relating to reducing health inequalities)
- However, some LSPs have found it difficult to move away from the optional outcomes and indicators suggested in the national guidance and develop a truly local and distinctive LAA. It can also be hard for other public sector partners to commit to local priorities because they are under pressure to deliver their own national targets.

## Enabling measures

- So far, local areas have found it challenging to think of new ideas about things they could do differently to improve services for local people. One of the major difficulties has been the fact that central government have seldom approved requests for enabling measures to meet local priorities.
- There are many opportunities for Scrutiny to help the LSP to identify obstacles and encourage LSPs to be ambitious when they ask for enabling measures.

## Management of local priorities

- Local areas are expected to deliver the targets in the LAA and serious under-performance can lead to interventions such as the withdrawal of funding. This poses several challenges;
  - **Should local areas focus on including local targets to ensure the LAA is a local as well as a national document – and risk being penalised for being ambitious?**

Or

- **Do they restrict the local elements of the LAA - and risk having partners only focus on delivering national priorities?**
- Scrutiny may have an important role in monitoring these risks and opportunities.

## Legal Powers that underpin partnership Scrutiny

- As well as Scrutiny of the Council's Executive, the Local Government Act 2000 give Scrutiny the power to report on 'matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area' – these powers are being further strengthened through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill with a duty being placed on external partners to respond to any recommendations made by Scrutiny.
- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill will add to Scrutiny Powers. The Bill sets out statutory requirements for Local Area Agreements including a duty on those organisations named within the LAA to respond to Scrutiny in relation to targets of the LAA that involve them. These duties include a responsibility to provide information in response to Scrutiny requests and to have regard to Scrutiny recommendations.

## Scrutiny and the LSP

It is essential that the work of Scrutiny is based on a sense of what it is intended to achieve and how it plans to be influential.

Effective Scrutiny should include an element of focus on improving what the partnership does through:

- Looking at ways to improve the achievements of the LSP and identify and address issues of under-performance
- Providing a forum for open dialogue between all partners to find solutions to challenges
- Allowing ward councillors a vital opportunity to provide a very local perspective and ensuring that Sustainable Community Strategies truly reflect what communities want.

### **Scrutiny role: holding to account**

The Scrutiny role should include;

- Providing challenge – Scrutiny is well placed to take up issues raised by the public - reality checking the future plans of the LSP against Councillors understanding of what communities really want.
- Addressing the democratic deficit – many local services do not fall under democratic control and so Scrutiny can provide some form of democratic community leadership and perspective.
- Scrutiny can bring information relating to the working of the LSP to a wider audience and therefore improve transparency and accountability.

### **Scrutiny role: Performance Management**

- Reviewing the performance management arrangements of the LSP to ensure they are robust and effective
- Review the impact and outcomes of strategies, including the Sustainable Community Strategy
- Reviewing the use of resources by LSP partners
- Reviewing the Council's contribution to the partnership and whether we are seeing value for money on our investment whether financial or in kind.

### **Scrutiny of Local Area Agreements**

The role of Scrutiny in relation to the Local Area Agreement covers;

- Development: deciding what want the LAA to achieve locally and how this can be linked to national priorities and mandatory outcomes, pushing for greater local freedom through 'enabling measures'.
- Performance: looking at how well the LASS is being implemented and reaching its goals, identifying what is going well and what is going wrong and how things can be improved.
- Review: the LAA has to be reviewed and refreshed annually to reflect changes such as new funding streams or improvements to mandatory performance indicators – Scrutiny should have a recognised role to play in this review process.

Countywide LSPs are expected to have a performance management and financial accountability framework, agreed by the government office for that region, to monitor and manage the LAA, with the County Council being defined as the accountable body.

**Scrutiny role; policy development and review**

Strategy development is an area of Scrutiny that may need greater attention. There should be opportunities for all members to be involved in the development of the Community Strategy and other linked strategies such as crime and disorder.

***“Scrutiny of Strategic partnerships presents a chance to develop the role and raise the profile of Scrutiny. The Council and it’s senior managers have a responsibility to ensure this development is supported and achieves its potential”***

***A Wider Conversation – effective Scrutiny of Local Strategic Partnerships.***

**General Partnership Performance Questions**

Increasingly, partnerships have a key role to play in delivering local services to local communities. There are two main potential benefits of effective partnership working. The first is improved service delivery through the co-ordination and integration of numerous agencies. It stands to reason that if everyone has a shared vision, the outcome will be more positive. By working in partnership, smaller agencies can pool resources and thus function more effectively.

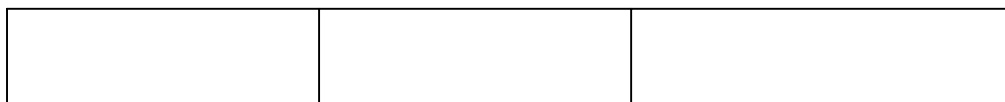
This is partnership work at it’s most basic, but to what extent are you as an elected members confident that South Somerset Together is realising this?

Secondly, partnership working can seek to include the wider community in decisions and actions which directly affect them. Although the local authority has democratic accountability, seeking to involve others can only help enhance democratic participation.

Are you aware of and satisfied with the LSP’s approach to wider engagement including you as elected Councillors and the community in general?

**Key Questions?**

1. **Details of partner organisations from the public sector, community, business and other?**
2. **What are the main functions of the partnership?**
3. **How is the LSP funded (identify funding sources and amount received from each source)**
4. **In terms of the ‘Partnership Life Cycle’ where is the LSP currently?**



**Forming                      Developing                      Performing                      Evaluating**

5. **Does the LSP have a clear long term vision of what it wants to achieve, agreed by all partners?**
6. **Are the roles and responsibilities of all partners clearly identified and understood by all partners?**

7. What is the role of SSDC in the LSP?
8. How is SSDC represented on the LSP?
9. What is the relationship between the SSDC LSP and the SSP?
10. What is the role of the Ward Member in the LSP, especially under enhanced community leadership roles under the terms of the new white paper?
11. How does our involvement in the LSP contribute to the delivery of our Corporate Aims and Objectives?
12. How do you ensure that the LSP membership is the right balance of organisations?
13. Have you identified any agencies which you think would add value to the work of the LSP but are not yet members?
14. How do you review the effectiveness of partners in terms of which partners contribute significantly to achieving objectives?
15. How does the LSP know that its work has a positive impact on the services provided to the community?
16. What consultation mechanisms are in place to ensure that the LSP is aware of and responding to Community need and expectation?
17. How does the LSP ensure that it is not duplicating work that is already being done elsewhere?
18. Over the past 12 months, can you identify;
  - What the LSP has done well?
  - Things that could have been done differently?
19. What resources does the LSP have at its disposal in terms of
  - Dedicated staff
  - Dedicated partnership budget
  - Budgets of member bodies for use by the partnership
  - Other e.g. in kind
20. How does the LSP ensure that its work follows the agreed outcomes and contributes to achieving the Community Strategy?
21. To which authorities / organisations is the LSP accountable?
22. How does the LSP ensure that the wider community is aware of its work?
23. Can you give any examples of how the LSP has adapted as a result of what it has learnt from best practice and how it is constantly seeking to improve and develop?
24. How often are the aims of the LSP reviewed and evaluated by partners and the community?



**25. Does the LSP have a robust performance management framework which includes clear milestones, stated outcomes and target dates?**