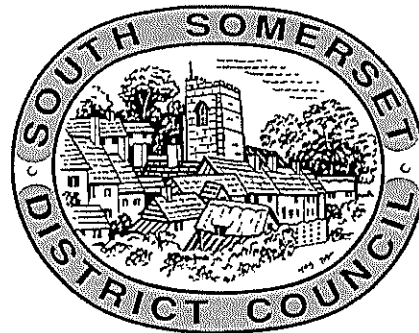


**SSDC Overview & Scrutiny Committee
and
South Somerset Together
(Local Strategic Partnership)**

Self-Assessment & Action Plan

November 2009



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How this document has been developed

In April 2009, the Audit Commission launched its guidance for Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) called *Working better together? Managing local strategic partnerships*. Within this document were four supplementary briefing documents including *Key messages for councils' overview and scrutiny functions*. As well as citing good practice examples of councils that have significantly improved the scrutiny of partnerships, the document provided questions for Overview and Scrutiny Committees and LSPs to consider. The six questions form the basis of this self-assessment.

A draft self-assessment was developed by officers with responsibilities for the LSP and Overview & Scrutiny Committee, which was considered by the LSP's Performance and Monitoring Sub-Committee on 4th September 2009 and recommended to the full Board on 25th September 2009. The LSP recommended working with Overview and Scrutiny to improve performance against the Sustainable Community Strategy and a meeting of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the LSP and Overview & Scrutiny Committee was held on 12th September 2009. At this meeting evidence of current practice was added to the draft Self-assessment and a more South Somerset specific Action Plan developed. This full version is below.

Monitoring of this Self-Assessment and Action Plan will be on-going as will the collating of evidence of improved working with Partners through the approaches outlined. This information will be included in the LSP's Annual Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, which is generally in September of each year.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP)				
Taken from: <i>Working Better Together? Key messages for councils' overview and scrutiny functions</i> (Audit Commission April 2009)				
Questions to improve the role of Overview & Scrutiny in LSP	Level of implementation			SSDC & SST Current practice
	RED response	AMBER response	GREEN response	
1. How well do elected members communicate back to their executives, Councils, and party groups?	Limited or no communication between elected members on the LSP and wider Parties.	Elected members report back to cabinet members but limited feedback to front-line councillors on the LSP or LAA.	LSP and LAA performance are discussed at cabinet and scrutiny meetings. Good feedback to front-line councillors.	<p>Current assessment: AMBER.</p> <p>SSDC's Leader of the Council and the four Area Chairmen/Portfolio Holders are on the LSP Board and attend LSP Board meetings. These Chairs provide cross-party representation, so they can feed back to their groups.</p> <p>Elected members are supported by senior officers at the LSP Board meetings. (CEO and Strategic Director for Place and Performance (Lead for LSP) are on Board whilst Strategic Director for Operations and Customer Focus, Assistant Directors, and Area Development Managers regularly attend Board meetings; with Service Heads and other officers attending as required). These ensure actions feed across to/from LSP and SSDC and SCC (Cabinet representative, Strategic Director and Community Development Officer for the County attend).</p> <p>LSP meetings are open to all including SSDC elected members and officers (as well as Partners and the general public).</p> <p>LSP papers are available on the SST website (with a link from SSDC website/front page and LSP Partner websites).</p>

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Further Actions Required				
Area of improvement	Actions	By whom?	By when?	Resource or other implications
1.1. Increase the awareness of elected members of LSP, SCS and the delivery of actions by the LSP	Produce a folder with all relevant information about the LSP for the Member's Room	LSP Coordinator	January 2010	None
	Overview & Scrutiny Chair and Vice-Chairs to take it in turn to attend LSP Board meetings.	Chair/Vice Chairs	November 2009	None
	Cllr Sue Steele SSDC Chairman of Scrutiny has attended LSP Board meetings on a regular basis since the Board meeting on 27th November 2009.			
	LSP Coordinate to keep Overview & Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny manager apprised of interest items on the Board agenda.	LSP Coordinator	November 2009	None
	LSP Coordinator keeps the Scrutiny Chair and Manager apprised of the content of the LSP Board agenda and the LSP commissioned work by SSDC and partners to deliver the outcomes of the SCS. The following meetings have taken place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Briefing with Scrutiny Chair, Vice-Chairs and Manager held on 2nd July 2009 on the work of the LSP; - Meeting with LSP Chair and Scrutiny Chair held on 12th November 2009 to discuss how to apply the guidance in the AC report <i>Working Better Together?</i> - Regular meetings between the LSP Coordinator and the Scrutiny Manager; - LSP Board agenda and minutes circulated to the Scrutiny Chair and manager. 			
	Area Chairs and ADM to give a feedback report on LSP Board meetings at the Area Committee Meetings in Chairman's Report, especially of items of interest to that Area.	Area Chairmen and ADMs	January 2010	None

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1.2. Developing training for overview and scrutiny members that include introductions to the work and governance of key partners;	Overview & Scrutiny Chair and Vice-Chairs to take it in turn to attend LSP Board meetings and all members invited to listen to regular presentations by LSP Partners about their organization and aims..	Chair/Vice Chairs All members	November 2009	None
All LSP meetings are open to the public and councillors. Members of Scrutiny can access the relevant information via the folder on the LSP in the member's room and the SST website.				
1.3. Developing joint training for overview and scrutiny members and members of partner organisations to encourage mutual understanding;				

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Questions to improve the role of Overview & Scrutiny in LSP	Level of implementation			SSDC & SST Current practice
	RED response	AMBER response	GREEN response	
<p>2. How well do elected members on overview and scrutiny challenge your LSP and its partners?</p>	<p>Limited or no challenge from overview and scrutiny to the LSP and its partners on either LSP or LAA performance.</p>	<p>Some challenge by overview and scrutiny on LSP performance or LAA delivery but this is not yet effective. Partners are yet to fully support this democratic role.</p>	<p>Overview and scrutiny effectively challenges LSP performance and LAA delivery. It can provide democratic challenge at each layer of the LSP. Partners support this challenge process.</p>	<p>Current Assessment: AMBER.</p> <p>LSP Chairman, SSDC Lead Officer and LSP Coordinator attend Overview & Scrutiny Committee annually.</p> <p>LSP officers met with Overview & Scrutiny Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Manager to discuss the LSP and SCS and how this links with SSDC's Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Overview & Scrutiny set a series of challenging questions for the LSP to report on in 2007 and report progress in 2008 at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting.</p> <p>Other members: Leader of the Council and Area Chairs/Portfolio Holders on the LSP Board scrutinise and challenge at Board meetings and workshops.</p> <p>The LSP produces an Annual Report and holds an AGM to which all elected members are invited.</p>

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Further Actions Required				
Area of improvement	Actions	By whom?	By when?	Resource or other implications
2.1. Improve challenge of LSP decisions and actions by Overview & Scrutiny Committee members.	Overview & Scrutiny Chair and Vice-Chairs to take it in turn to attend LSP Board meetings and challenge decisions and actions as necessary.	Chair/Vice Chairs	November 2009	None
	Scrutiny Chair attends LSP Board meetings regularly.			
	LSP Partners to attend the Overview & Scrutiny meeting of the annual review of the LSP to answer specific questions about decisions and actions relating to SCS delivery.	LSP Partners	Immediate	None
	LSP Partners invited to attend the annual review of the LSP by Scrutiny Committee.			
	LSP Partners to join review panels to provide expert support to Overview & Scrutiny Committee members.	LSP Partners Scrutiny Manager Overview & Scrutiny Chair/Vice Chairs	As required	Partners to be given plenty of time to enable them to participate fully.
	Scrutiny Manager to liaise with LSP Coordinator as to which partner(s) would be able to inform reviews by Scrutiny Committee.			

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	Overview & Scrutiny Committee members to be involved in LSP Task & Finish Groups addressing key actions of the SCS, in line with the Committee's review programme.	Overview & Scrutiny members Scrutiny Manager LSP Coordinator	As required	Overview & Scrutiny members to be given plenty of time to enable them to participate fully.
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Questions to improve the role of Overview & Scrutiny in LSP	Level of implementation			SSDC & SST Current practice
	RED response	AMBER response	GREEN response	
3. How effective is the policy development role of overview and scrutiny in influencing joint working through the LSP?	Limited or no effect from the policy development role of overview and scrutiny on our LSP.	Some service reviews recommendations have influenced LSP partners at operational group level.	Overview and scrutiny is effective in influencing policy direction for our LSP at Executive and board levels. This has led to evidence-based improvement to joint working.	<p>Current assessment: RED.</p> <p>The LSP influences SSDC's policies, Corporate Plan and Service Plans through the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy. In addition the LSP and SCS influences LSP Partner organisations' Corporate and operational plans and policies on areas such as equalities and carbon reduction.</p> <p>Existing good joint working through the LSP for example the Joint Enforcement Project (Police, SSDC, EA enforcement officers improved working arrangements and produced an Aide Memoir) with no funding needed.</p> <p>CEO, Leader & Portfolio Holders exert a very positive influence on partnership working at the LSP and especially through commitment to deliver the SCS and LAA.</p>

Further Actions Required

Area of improvement	Actions	By whom?	By when?	Resource or other implications
3.1. Enhancing the role of Overview & Scrutiny Committee in influencing joint working through the LSP				
3.2. Partner Policy development through the LSP	Some Actions in the SCS are designed specifically to bring the policies and practices of all LSP Partners are aligned and best practice.	LSP Coordinator	2015	There is a risk to all these actions being delivered in that not all LSP partners are at the same level of policy development and good practice. There is also a difference in resource capacity of the individual organisations.

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Questions to improve the role of Overview & Scrutiny in LSP	Level of implementation			SSDC & SST Current practice
	RED response	AMBER response	GREEN response	
4. How robust is your LSP's (and partners') approach to delivering performance against LAA targets?	We don't have a delivery plan across the LSP. LAA delivery is being taken forward by the lead agencies with minimal reporting to the LSP.	We have delivery plans for the operational groups. Some gaps in arrangements have not been assessed. We are sometime subject to overview and scrutiny. Reports are provided to the executive and the board but performance is not always integrated with risk and resource management.	There are delivery plans for each LAA target. Delivery chain analysis has identified gaps in arrangements and mitigation measures are in place. Accountable organizations and lead managers are identified for each LAA target. SCS and LAA Delivery plans have senior managers responsible for performance. They report performance, risk and resources to the operational groups and to the executive and board on an exception basis. Overview and scrutiny is used to challenge performance.	<p>Current assessment: AMBER/GREEN.</p> <p>The LSP is committed to delivering the SCS.</p> <p>The SCS has 35 Strategic Priorities and 50 Actions in 31 Delivery Plans (linked to the Somerset LAA delivery plans) developed through workshops attended by LSP partners; each DP has a Lead Partner(s), Supporting Partner(s) and clear supporting actions. SSDC responsibilities against the SCS and Somerset LAA are clearly set out in Our Target Insert/Service Plans.</p> <p>The LSP currently monitors progress through its LSP Coordinator, bi-monthly progress reports to the LSP Board on agreed actions, reports to Working Group and the Performance Monitoring Sub-committee.</p> <p>The LSP's PMSC is taking a more active role in performance and risk management for the LSP partners. It is trailing a Performance Monitoring and risk management framework to be evaluated in January 2010. An SCS project that did not fully achieved its outcomes; the Project sponsor and manager reported at its meeting in September 2009, clear learning points were identified and a recommendation for taking the issue forward presented and agreed by the LSP Board at its next meeting.</p>

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	The SCS has been included in SSDC TEN-monitoring performance system, which has improved the reporting of progress especially highlighting areas of concern (the system uses a traffic light process against a range of factors including partnership working and resource allocation). The report is discussed in detail at the LSP's Performance Monitoring Sub-Committee and key points raised at the LSP's Board meeting (although the whole TEN report appears in the appendices to the agenda). The agenda is sent to the Scrutiny Chair and Manager.			
Further Actions Required				
Area of improvement	Actions	By whom?	By when?	Resource or other implications
4.1. The LSP developing stronger links between itself and the Somerset Strategic Partnership's Themed Sub-groups.	Letter to Chairs of two SSP Sub-groups to request improved representation from South Somerset.	LSP Coordinator & Lead Officer	11/11/09	None
	The LSP was invited to appoint representatives to the two groups, which was done by March 2010. All SSP Themed Sub-groups have representatives and substitutes from South Somerset. Partners are advised of the dates of these meetings.			
	LSP and SSDC representatives on the SSP sub-groups submit a feedback form of key messages and implications for the district to the LSP Coordinator for the LSP Board meetings.	Representatives on SSP Sub-groups	November 2009	None
	Feedback forms and/or verbal updates by LSP representatives made at each LSP Board meetings and the implications for the district highlighted.			
4.2. Improving commitment of LSP Partners to the delivery of the SCS in South Somerset	LSP Chairman's letter to LSP Partner organisations' CEO and/or Chairman for commitment to the SCS and the agreed Priority Actions.	LSP Chair LSP partners	23/09/09	None
	Letters sent September 2009. Replies confirming commitment to the SCS received with partners committing to specific Actions in the SCS as appropriate.			

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Questions to improve the role of Overview & Scrutiny in LSP	Level of implementation			SSDC & SST Current practice
	RED response	AMBER response	GREEN response	
5. How does the LSP ensure there is accountability, through its member organisations, for its actions?	The LSP has no formal systems – by default it relies on members' governance structures.	The LSP includes complaints and redress in its governance arrangements. It provides an account of its success as part of its annual review.	The LSP has a layered approach to accountability. It gives an account of its activities, successes and failure to its members and the public. It responds to overview and scrutiny challenge. It has a light-touch complaints and redress system which the executive uses to report performance to the board.	<p>Current assessment: AMBER/GREEN. LSP Partners have agreed in principle to deliver the SCS Actions.</p> <p>The LSP Coordinator ensures responsible/lead partners prepare and submit progress reports on time and this information is presented through the agenda to the Board that reviews this progress at every meeting of the Board, against agreed projects and actions.</p> <p>The LSP Working Group has until recently monitored projects and programmes (this has now transferred to the Performance Monitoring Sub-Committee). The Working group will review the internal systems and operations of the LSP including delivery of actions against the LSP's Self-Assessment priority actions (agreed by the Board in May 2009) and Draft EIA.</p> <p>The LSP Coordinator deals with questions/complaints that the public raise.</p>

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				<p>If the LSP Board is dissatisfied with progress it can ask the PMSC to investigate the project and pull out reasons for failure and learning for future activities.</p> <p>All LSP Board meetings open to the public who can formally request to speak, or can be invited to comment at specific points in the agenda (all dates are on the website with a link from the SSDC website and partner websites).</p> <p>The Annual Report is presented at the AGM and fully outlines the activities of the LSP throughout the year.</p> <p>The AGM has an open forum/question time for the public to challenge what the LSP is doing.</p> <p>The LSP website has a facility for a public forum for comments, complaints etc.</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>The following actions have been implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LSP Partners have written to confirm their commitment to the SCS and agreed to deliver specific Actions; - LSP Board Forward Plan informs partners of when reports on Actions/projects are required; - LSP Coordinator chases up reports so that they are included in Board papers on time; - The LSP's Performance Monitoring Sub-committee holds lead partners to account for projects that did not achieve their outcomes fully to understand why and to learn from for future work of the LSP and its partners; - The LSP adopted an Equality Impact Assessment and Action Plan on 27th November 2009 and regular updates on progress are made at the LSP's Working Group and the South Somerset Corporate Equalities Steering Group; - The LSP conducted a Self-assessment in 2009 and agreed three priority actions from this to deliver in 2009/10. Regular progress reports are given to the LSP's Working Group; - The LSP held an AGM on 16th June 2010 and produced an Annual Report 2010 circulated at that meeting; - The LSP held a workshop to agree the SCS Priorities for 2010/11 at its Board meeting on 16th July 2010. 			

Further Actions Required				
Area of improvement	Actions	By whom?	By when?	Resource or other implications
Questions to improve the role of Overview & Scrutiny in LSP				
	Level of implementation			SSDC & SST Current practice
	RED response	AMBER response	GREEN response	
6. How well are elected members involved in challenging LAA performance through the scrutiny process?	Elected members have limited or no involvement in challenging LAA performance outside the council's services.	Overview and scrutiny is developing but tends to be ad hoc. There is no arrangement for the LSP to recommend topics for scrutiny. The LSP and partners have developed protocols for responding to scrutiny recommendations. Some partners are still suspicious of the overview and scrutiny role.	There is a clear process for planning overview and scrutiny of the LSP. There are protocols for responding to scrutiny recommendations. Partners are bought into the scrutiny process. Elected members have received training on LAA and performance challenge and have the support to enable them to challenge effectively. 10	<p>Current assessment: RED.</p> <p>SSDC members in 2008 involved in the development of the Corporate Plan Refresh (which includes the SCS and LAA actions for the authority), those actions are now in the Our Targets Insert and Services Plans and will be monitored by Heads of Service/Director/MB and shortly through SSDC's TEN system.</p> <p>SSDC elected members involved in workshops and events for the development of the SCS in 2008. Members on LSP Board involved in further refinement of the actions through workshops.</p>
	- SSDC Leader, Portfolio Holders and senior officers attended the LSP Board meeting workshop of 16th July 2010 to agree SCS priorities for 2010/11.			
Further Actions Required				
Area of improvement	Actions	By whom?	By when?	Resource or other implications
6.1. Organising joint council scrutiny of the LAA in a multi-tier area.				

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6.2. Using overview and scrutiny to identify risks to LAA delivery and to recommend action to mitigate those risks.				
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