

AGENDA ITEM NO. 11

REPORT TO: Halton Strategic Partnership Board

DATE: 15 March 2006

SUBJECT: Supporting the LSP

INTRODUCTION

At its last meeting the Board agreed NRF allocations for coming years. Part of this includes resources to provide support to the LSP through Central Team Activity. To help plan for the future the Board asked for greater detail on the support being provided. This report provides an examination of the role of LSP support in Halton.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Board is recommended to note the report and highlight issues for future consideration.

BACKGROUND

It is important to set the role of Central Team support to the LSP in its proper context. There is no single, laid down model for LSPs or how they should operate. It is for local discretion how they are structured, operated and supported. In its recent consultation paper ODPM posit the role of an LSP as being:

1. The partnership of partnerships in an area, providing strategic coordination and linking with other plans and bodies at a regional, sub-regional and local level.
2. To ensure a Sustainable Community Strategy is produced that sets the vision and priorities, agreed by all parties and based on a solid evidence base.
3. To develop and drive the delivery of the Local Area Agreement.
4. To agree an action plan for achieving the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities, including the Local Area Agreement outcomes.

The Halton LSP follows this model with action planning through the SSPs. This year will see the development of LAAs that will be negotiated for April 2007. Neighbourhood activity and community engagement in influencing strategic priorities is an increasingly important part of government policy. The LSP needs to link neighbourhood-level activity and influence strategic priorities and resource allocations. Halton already engages with communities through Area Forums and PADs. Halton is currently developing its own pilot models of neighbourhood management using the neighbourhood element of SSCF.

Government does not specify a particular structure for LSPs but in its guidance suggest an Executive Board to make strategic decisions, underpinned by thematic partnerships – the model followed in Halton. LSP partners need arrangements to be able to hold each other to account to effectively co-ordinate delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA.

The role of LSPs in co-ordinating delivery and the introduction of LAAs make capacity increasingly important. LSPs need skills in performance management, programme and project management, strategic planning, policy development, data collection and analysis, marketing and communication, collaboration and community engagement. Therefore, the key building blocks for effective LSPs in the Governments view are:

- Leadership – clarity of vision, commitment of all partners and embedding these in partners’ plans.
- Delivery management – a senior manager and small team to drive implementation, including planning, co-ordinating action, project management, overcoming obstacles and tracking progress.
- Delivery system – a system to collate and analyse data, appraise options and provide evidence-based management information to drive and monitor performance.
- Communication – across the partnership, with all sectors and the public, to raise awareness, garner commitment, and share good practice.

In terms of the impact of the Halton LSP on specific areas of policy it is obviously difficult to distinguish between the activities of the many existing partnership structures relating to employment, health, education, crime and disorder, early years, for example, and any additional activities attributable to the LSP. However, we remain convinced that the presence and activity of the LSP in Halton has added considerable value to the regeneration process.

CONSIDERATION

In order to support the LSP efforts in achieving the activities outlined above, the LSP has put in place a dedicated support structure. For 2006/07 the central activity budget is £363K. This wholly supports the costs of 3.5 staff of the LSP Team itself; a 50% contribution to the salaries of the three Policy advisers who support the work of the LSP and the SSPs in particular; and a 50% contribution to the salary of the accountant who looks after Accountable Body issues. The Council’s Partnership Manager manages the Central Team at no cost.

For 2006/07 onwards the Board has decided that coordination will no longer be supported by NRF. Each SSP is currently deciding how best partners can pick up this burden. This has implications for the quality and consistency of approach (which Chairs are already well aware of), use of the Council’s Policy Advisers, and the demands on the Central Team.

The full budget for 2006/07 is as follows:

Item	Budget (£ ,000)	Proportion (%)
Salaries	200	55
Communications	40	11
Conferences/Events	30	8
Training & Capacity	20	6
Social Enterprise	30	8
Research & Intelligence	20	6
Overheads	23	6
Total	363	100

It should not be forgotten that partners make a considerable commitment to the LSP through their attendance and work on behalf of the Board and SSPs. Therefore, it can be seen that the staffing and resources available to the LSP are made up of a mix of financial support from NRF and partners in kind contributions. The key question is whether in relation to the tasks expected the LSP has the appropriate resource base for taking strategy development and actions forward, especially in the context of LAAs and possibly a greater reliance by Government on LSPs taking forward its various agendas. The extent of the tasks involved, their complexity and inter-relationship is for the Board and partners to determine.

The fragmentation and complexity of partnership arrangements which led to the establishment of LSPs makes relationships crucial. Partnerships work in large part on the basis of good interpersonal relations, mutual interdependence and the building of trust. Often it is the officers working explicitly on behalf of the LSP that bind this effort together. This means that formal working arrangements are needed, which is why governance arrangements are so important.

CONCLUSION

The Central Team budget envisages NRF support on a diminishing basis for the next two years. The working assumption is that by April 2008 partners will need to have come to some agreement on re-conceptualising and defining the work of the LSP in Halton, calculating the value it adds, and found mechanisms to support the management and delivery arrangements that underpin its work. This could well be through partner financial contributions, a levy on activity, or in-kind support. The purpose of this report is not to seek a solution now, but to further cement with partners the need to start to consider the future sustainability of the partnership and its activity.