

Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future

A consultation paper

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Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Community Strategies were introduced as a result of the Local Government Act 2000. They have helped make great strides to improve the local quality of life. LSPs are now established in all areas and are working in an increasingly complex and challenging environment with important expectations being placed on them. This has increased the need to ensure that LSPs are working effectively and accountably; a theme developed in the Audit Commissions recently published paper "*Governing Partnerships*".

The document examines the future role of LSPs, their governance and accountability, and their capacity to deliver Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements (LAAs). It poses a series of questions under each of these headings designed to help us understand how LSPs are operating at present and where changes could be made nationally, regionally and locally to help them develop most effectively.

- Role of LSPs - this role has changed with the national role out of LAAs which requires LSPs to genuinely co-ordinate delivery in their area. There is also a need for clarity about the relationship between Sustainable Community Strategies, LAAs and Local Development Frameworks.
- Status of LSPs - the increasing expectations placed on LSPs calls into question their voluntary nature - the consultation proposes establishing a duty on various public service providers to co-operate with the local authority in producing a Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA - this reflects the situation in Scotland.
- Governance of the LSP - the advent of LAAs also places a strong emphasis on the need for effective governance and accountability of the LSP. It does not propose one model to fit all but specifies some principles of operation.

- Accountability - the consultation examines the strength of the accountability upwards to central government and the possibilities of strengthening local accountability to other partners.
- Capacity of LSPs - this is key to ensuring their success. The consultation explores the key skills and the support needed by LSPs.

The consultation also reflects the progress made in areas in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) resources, where LSPs have already made the shift from focusing on process to the delivery of outcomes. The aim is to capitalise on this success.

A copy of the actual consultation paper can be downloaded from:

<http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1162320>

A list of the questions used in the actual consultation exercise is attached.

Questions Used in the LSP Consultation

- 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
- 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?
- 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?
- 4: Are the proposed steps in the development of a Sustainable Community Strategy correct?
- 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 ?
- 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?
- 7: In two-tier areas, is it most appropriate for the responsibility for neighbourhood engagement to rest with the district level LSP?
- 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?
- 9: How could revised guidance and accompanying support materials best ensure that Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks join up effectively?
- 10: Should every local authority area have its own LSP?
- 11: Would the establishment of a greater delineation of roles between county and district LSPs as suggested be sensible?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 15: Within the LSP framework and its established priorities, would the creation of single delivery vehicles to tackle particular issues be helpful?

- 16: How can the neighbourhood and parish, tiers be involved most effectively on the LSP on:
a) the executive and b) individual thematic partnerships?
- 17: How can the private, voluntary and community sectors be involved most effectively on the LSP as: a) the executive b) individual thematic partnerships?
- 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?
- 19: If so, what obligations, such as attendance, financial or staff support, would be useful to place on partners?
- 20: If so, which public sector agencies would the duty be most sensibly placed on?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 24: What do you see as the key role for executive councillors within LSPs?
- 25: What do you see as the appropriate role for backbenchers particularly in ensuring a high quality of local engagement?
- 26: What would make councillors' powers of overview and scrutiny more effective in scrutinising the 4 blocks of the LAA?
- 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?
- 28: How can we promote effective community engagement and involvement, from all sections of the community in shaping local priorities and public services?
- 29: How can we maximise the opportunities for joint policy and joint activity on community engagement, including the LDF, the LAA and the Sustainable Community Strategy?
- 30: How can accountability to local people and businesses be enhanced?
- 31: What are your LSP's key support/skill gaps?
- 32: What extra or different support would be most helpful in shifting to a more delivery focused role?
- 33: How would LSPs prefer to receive information and support; through guidance, toolkits, sign-posting to existing information, practical learning opportunities etc?

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?

35: What learning or development do you feel is required by LSPs in order to delivery sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level?