

## Local Strategic Partnerships - Shaping their future

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has recently published the consultation paper "Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future". The consultation reexamines the role, governance and capacity of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Community Strategies.

LSPs 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 Commission's recently published paper "Governing Partnerships".

The consultation forms part of a Government-wide debate with local government and key stakeholders on the future of local government, under the banner of 'local:vision'.

The aim of local:vision is to generate a shared vision for the future of local government, to secure continuous improvement in public services and to achieve better outcomes for people and places. So far the debate has generated productive ideas on local

leadership, neighbourhoods and a new performance framework. One of the papers published for consultation is "Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future". The consultation reexamines the role, governance and capacity of LSPs and Community Strategies in terms of short term changes and more radical longer-term adjustments.

LSPs and Community Strategies were introduced as a result of the Local Government Act 2000. They have helped make great strides to improve local quality of life. LSPs are now established in all areas, with over 360 currently established in England. Much progress has been made in terms of representation, establishing a common vision and moving to genuinely collaborative working. Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships have a critical role in further developing coherent service provision and genuinely sustainable communities.

Key ambitions have been identified after discussions with key national, regional and local partners. These are:

- Commitment amongst central government departments, regional organisations and local partners to the LSP system of partnerships and Sustainable Community Strategy as the over-arching local plan
- An evolved role for the local authority including local authority members in facilitating action through the LSP and Sustainable Community Strategy
- LSPs able to effectively identify and deliver against the priorities for joint action in their area through Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Local Development Framework, in a clearly accountable way
- LSPs better able to support neighbourhood engagement and to help ensure the views of neighbourhoods and parish councils can influence strategic local delivery and spending
- Effective, transparent and accountable governance and scrutiny arrangements for LSPs to enable partners to hold each other to account and local people to hold the partnership to account.

The ODPM's vision for the role of LSP is that it takes the strategic lead in the locality by bringing together the views of local partners, including representatives from the private, voluntary and community sectors, with national, regional and neighbourhood priorities in developing the Sustainable Community Strategy. The

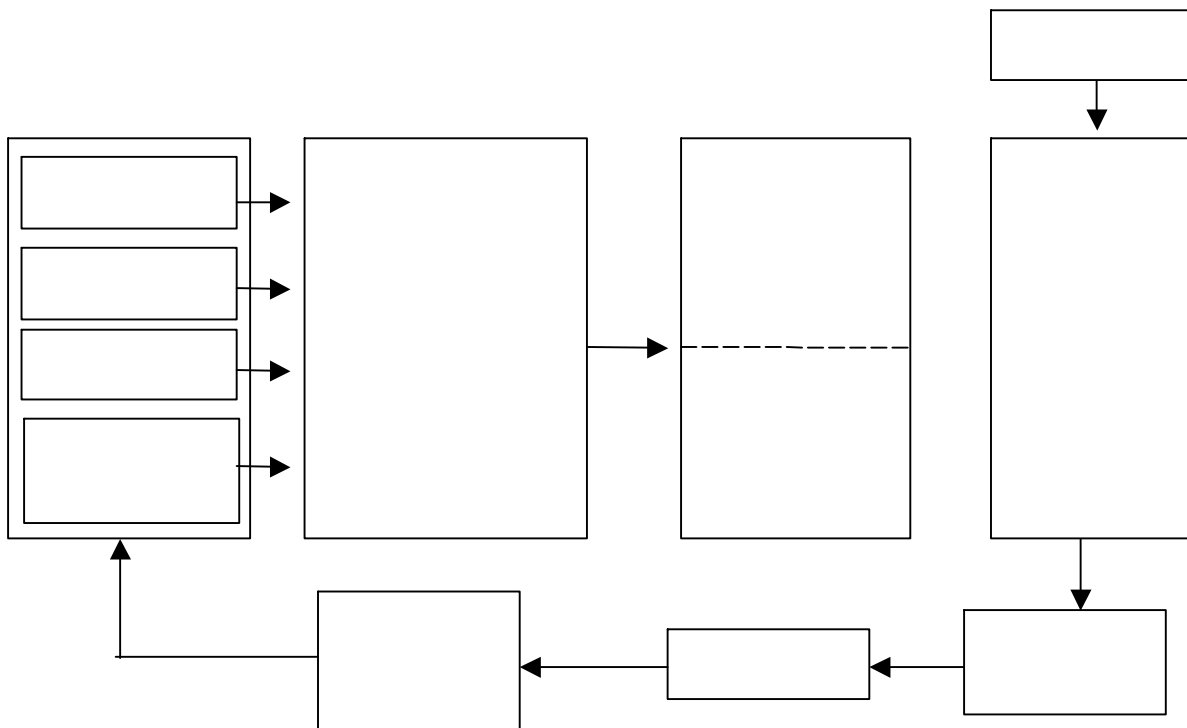


diagram below shows the working arrangement for these proposals:

A lot is expected of all LSPs, in particular, the development and implementation of LAAs. This enhanced role provides new challenges to many LSPs. They need to be

capable of attracting senior membership, taking difficult decisions and challenging partner members where necessary, in order to drive forward local public service improvements and manage the performance of the elements of the partnership.

LAAs, first piloted in 2004/05 are now being rolled out to all upper-tier authorities in England over the next two years. LAAs set out the priorities for a local area negotiated between central government, represented by Government Office, and a local area, represented by the local authority and the LSP. There are also key links between the LAA and the Community Strategy - both of which set out the priorities for the locality - and many areas have taken their Community Strategies as the basis of their LAA. Gateshead Strategic Partnership agreed to be a pilot LAA and signed its agreement in March 2005

This diagram shows the relationship between Sustainable Community Strategies, Local Area Agreements and local action planning:



LSPs also have a key role in the Government's proposals to increase the opportunities for neighbourhood engagement. It is envisaged that LSPs will have a facilitating role in supporting neighbourhood engagement and ensuring that neighbourhoods can influence strategic local priorities.

A further influence on the role of the LSP is the change in focus of Community Strategies to become "Sustainable Community Strategies".

A clear role has also been identified for the local authority in initiating and maintaining momentum in the LSP, ensuring appropriate representation across

different sectors including involving local residents and scrutinising the LSP. The local authority is also responsible for producing the Community Strategy and is ultimately accountable for the LSPs actions. The local authority role is vital given the statutory power local authorities have to secure the economic, social and environmental well-being of the local areas.

The ODPM believe that it is crucial for the success of LSPs that they are able to co-ordinate delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA. The ODPM want LSPs:

1. To be the partnership of partnerships in an area, providing the strategic co-ordination with the area and linking with other plans and bodies established at the regional, sub-regional and local level.
2. To ensure a Sustainable Community Strategy is produced that sets the vision and priorities for the area agreed by all parties, including local citizens and businesses, and built on a solid evidence base
3. To develop and drive the effective delivery of their Local Area Agreements
4. To agree an action plan for achieving the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities, including the LAA outcomes.


The ODPM are also seeking views on the proposal to impose a statutory requirement upon local authorities and specified bodies to work together, with a parallel duty on local authorities to involve the business, voluntary and community sectors.

In order to deliver this challenging agenda, training and support should be provided to all LSPs so that LSP members and staff possess skills in performance management, negotiation, policy development, and community engagement and that all training is provided by one access route.

Consultation is taking place until 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2006.

### **Further Information**

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