

REPORT: TO LSP BOARD
DATE: 26 FEBRUARY 2009



SUBJECT: NEW WAYS OF WORKING

AUTHOR: LSP MANAGER

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 To apprise members of initial proposals to put into effect the previously agreed changes to the way the Board works

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That LSP Board members agree to:

- i) Nominate Chairs to lead the work of the Board on two of the four fixed theme groups i.e. Sustainable Communities, and Healthier Communities, who will become full members of the Board, and make initial suggestions as to key membership
 - a) Maintain the current Chairs in place on the CDRP and CYPSP and confirm their membership of the Board;
 - b) Re-establish LSP Steering Group, comprised of the Chair and Vice Chair of the LSP, the Chairs of the fixed theme groups, and Chairs of the Task and Finish Teams as appropriate;
 - c) Establish five new Task and Finish teams, 'Sustainable Community Strategy', 'Communications', 'Meeting the Challenges of the Credit Crunch', 'Improving Educational Attainment' and 'Joining Up Public Services', each reporting directly to the board, or a nominated theme group;
 - d) Review the membership of the Board on an ongoing basis, following recommendations from the Steering Group;
 - e) Engage with the 'Aspire to Perform' programme in order to develop effective performance management systems (linking to LAA, and other key targets) and prepare for the introduction of Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA);
 - f) Establish an Officer Working Group to set up effective systems for the management of projects funded by the LAA Reward Grant;
 - g) Accept the financial amendments set out at paragraph 11
 - h) Amend the LSP constitution in line with these changes.
- ii) Delegate practical implementation of these recommendations to the reformed Steering Group

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The LSP Board agreed a series of reforms of its working practices at its meeting of 18 December 2008. This followed extensive consultation with individual Board members, and collectively at the Boards 'Away day' held in the autumn, with follow-up discussions on 27 November. The outcomes of these activities were a clear understanding and agreement on the steps the board needed to take to move to the next level and reinvigorate its activities.

3.2 Some key messages and themes emerging from these discussions included:

- i The need to build on the strengths of the partnership, the good working relationships that exist and the enthusiasm and support of the individual members and organisations involved;
- ii The importance of ensuring the right people, at the right level, from the right organisations, attended the right meetings, to ensure that the LSP could meet its strategic and executive aims;
- iii The need for the partnership to be strategic in its approach, building up a clear picture of the area it is serving by sharing intelligence, and then ensuring that its interventions, and any new services it commissions focus on a small number of important issues, and deliver real 'added value';
- iv An understanding that the partnership has a major role in agreeing a core set of objectives and policies, based on up-to-date, and jointly commissioned qualitative and quantitative research, that would be adopted by all the partners and would be driven down within their organisations. This would help to 'bend' existing resource allocations into areas of jointly agreed local priority;
- v The need for the renewal and refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), in tandem with the production of the Local Development Framework (LDF). This will provide a strategic focus for the work of the partners together, and individually, and a clear statement of the strategic interventions the partnership would seek to achieve, and how it intended to implement an 'outcome driven focus';
- vi A clear acceptance of the partnership's 'advocacy' and 'ambassadorial' role. Representing the interests of the Epping Forest area at a county, regional and national level, and ensuring a clear and coordinated voice for the area in the forums that matter, particularly those that are responsible for allocating funding;
- vii An understanding of the LSP's Scrutiny role on behalf of the area, ensuring that all partners are working effectively to deliver key local services;
- viii The need to place the customer and citizen at the centre of everything the partnership does and provide a forum for all local groups, and people, to better engage in shaping public service provision.

- 3.3 A series of objectives and priorities were also agreed, in advance of the SCS being refreshed, to help inform and drive forward the activity of the Board and Theme Groups, and support the selection of Task and Finish topics. These included:
- i Targeting Health Inequalities;
 - ii Raising Educational attainment;
 - iii Protecting the areas 'Green and unique' status while enhancing regeneration opportunities, reducing emissions and improving public transport;
 - iv Improving Access to public services;
 - v Ensuring the LDF incorporates an effective core strategy;
 - vi Reducing fear of crime;
 - vii Ensuring tackling 'fear of crime' among vulnerable groups was a key focus for work.
- 3.4 These key issues and priorities provide a framework for agreeing the new strategy and the background for the suggested operational changes highlighted in sections 4 to 10 below.

4.0 BOARD COMPOSITION

- 4.1 While the Board has previously indicated its willingness to carry on with its current composition 'pro tem', if it wishes to increase its strategic role and ensure the right people are represented at the right meetings, it may be more appropriate to review membership on an ongoing basis. This is especially necessary, as a review of previous attendance has indicated that some Board members have been unable to attend for several meetings. This can impact significantly on the input and engagement from key sectors, and therefore the ability of the partnership to deliver on programmes it may wish to pursue e.g. dealing with the credit crunch.
- 4.2 It is suggested that the Steering Group takes on responsibility for enhancing and reviewing Board membership on an ongoing basis and reports its recommendations to the Board for ratification.

5.0 NEW STRUCTURES

- 5.1 The last Board meeting agreed to establish two new Theme Groups to deliver the interim priorities and enable a greater focus of limited resources on those areas where the partnership could make a real difference. It is recommended that these groups be established as soon as possible, each under the leadership of a nominated Board member and with identified administrative support from the LSP team. Where possible the Theme groups should build on, and take forward, areas of work begun by the previous theme groups, utilising the talent and experience of members of these groups to progress work. Regard should be given to projects designed to achieve LAA targets and relevant performance indicators in each area. However the theme groups should look wider than the LAA's, identifying a small but significant work

programme (with key PI's) that should be delivered while the SCS is being refreshed, and beyond.

- 5.2 To ensure that the Board's structures and programmes are continually evolving to meet new challenges (including the CAA, and Local Development Framework), it is suggested that the Board work with the 'Aspire to Perform' team from the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). Initial discussions have already been initiated by the LSP Manager with EERA on the type of support that maybe available. EERA have just completed a programme with Harlow 20/20 and have capacity to work with Epping Forest in a few months time. A written brief has been requested setting out how EERA might tailor their support programme to identify, and meet needs in Epping Forest, and provide a point of comparison with other LSPs. It is suggested that this brief be discussed by the next meeting of the Steering group with a view to agreeing the content of a support programme and its timing. Members may wish at this time to indicate areas where they feel additional investigation/review might be helpful. The 'Aspire to Perform' service is free to local LSPs.
- 5.3 Given the Board's key priorities it is further suggested that five 'Task and Finish teams' are established to investigate and review performance in priority areas and report back to the Board with key recommendations. The Board may wish to launch these work streams in a phased manner.

6.0 COMMUNICATIONS TASK AND FINISH TEAM

- 6.1 Members have previously expressed concern at the Board's lack of public profile. There is clearly little public understanding of its role and remit, and there is little evidence of the Board effectively celebrating its success, which would also help to increase public awareness and accountability. While everyone acknowledges a joint responsibility to keep the public, key stakeholders and other elements of government aware of what the Board is doing there is little effective mechanisms in place for doing so. It is suggested that a small Task and Finish team is established, lead by the LSP Manager, to review current performance and produce a new communications strategy for the Board to drive forward work in this area. Key areas of investigation to include:

- i 'Branding', name and logo, including a new 'strapline';
- ii Development of the website, including dynamic content, hosting and updating;
- iii Identification of target audiences;
- iv Production of an Annual Report, and introductory leaflet;
- v Potential for joint consultation, newsletter/magazine, other publications;
- vi Production of displays, exhibitions and other publicity products;
- vii Press release targets for the Board, Theme Groups etc.

7.0 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH TEAM

- 7.1 A Task and Finish Team should be established to review, refresh and refocus the existing community strategy, ensuring effective linkages with the Local

Development Framework (LDF). It is suggested that this Team is lead by the Deputy Chief Executive EFDC, with support of the LSP Manager, key partners and the councils planning Team. Board members may wish to suggest additional membership of the Task and Finish team. To ensure that the SCS is delivered rapidly, the Board may wish to set a target date for completion, including extensive public consultation and a community conference. It is recommended that a completion date of no later than October 2009 should be agreed.

8.0 'JOINING UP' TASK AND FINISH TEAM

- 8.1 A key aspiration of the original Local Government Act which established Local Strategic Partnerships was that they should attempt to rationalise plans and strategies and, where possible, join up service provision to the benefit of local people. In addition, the 'Gershon' proposal for efficiency savings in the public sector encourages the idea of public sector providers banding together to deliver frontline or back office services, with real benefits to customers and real savings to taxpayers. It may also fit in with the Board's wish to perform a more strategic role to examine how Epping Forest engages with regional and other local partnerships, and existing and future opportunities outside the local area. There may be the potential for real advantage, locally, in joining up with existing programmes or partnerships around development of the Stansted,/M11 corridor, the Olympics, or forging closer relations with strategic groups covering North and East London.
- 8.2 The Board may wish to commission a Task and Finish Team to undertake investigations into the potential for better joined-up working locally and regionally. This could identify examples of good practice elsewhere and potential opportunities for further investigation. Areas such as joint arrangements for information and data exchange, common consultation platforms, shared magazines and websites, a West Essex economic forum etc might also prove interesting areas for exploration.
- 8.3 An Officer Working Group to 'bed-in' the projects which will be funded by LAA Reward Grant is being proposed for agreement by the Board, elsewhere on this agenda. At a later date, it maybe appropriate to locate oversight of these programmes within the relevant Theme Groups

9.0 MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE CREDIT CRUNCH TASK AND FINISH TEAM

- 9.1 The deteriorating economic situation is clearly a major issue for local communities and local service providers. Correlations have been evident in the past with severe economic downturn, leading to increases in unemployment, business failures etc which impact directly on the health and well being of local communities and the public services that support them. In particular, negative impacts on health and increases in crime, falling employment rates and increasing homelessness due to raising repossession levels might well be assumed to flow from the current downturn. Epping Forest in particular has a sizeable number of residents employed in the financial sector. This has accounted for a significant proportion of employment growth over recent years, leaving the area particularly vulnerable to a contraction in this sector of the economy. The Partnership may wish to establish a Task and Finish Team to review the nature and extent of the impact of the downturn in this area, working with local expert groups and academic institutions, to produce

recommendations to the Board. These could assess how the local economy and employment might best be supported and how the partners should invest in, or change the focus of, public services to better support local residents.

10.0 IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT TASK AND FINISH TEAM

10.1 A key priority for the Board is to enhance educational opportunities and attainment, raising aspirations and delivering better outcomes for local children. The Board remains concerned at the current attainment levels of local children and the pattern of educational provision, with a surprisingly large percentage of local children being educated outside the district boundaries. The Board may wish to establish a Task and Finish Team to investigate and define underlying trends, review key targets, and highlight any blockages to improvement, in order to establish Epping Forest as a beacon of excellence in this field.

11.0 FINANCE

11.1 The LSP budget has, up until this time, been relatively simple to administer. However, with the full complement of staff now in place and the imminent arrival of £450,000 of reward grant the procedures and structures of budget management need to be reassessed. It is recommended that a system of exception reporting is undertaken with an annual update to the Board of expenditure and costs incurred which will form part of a proposed Annual Report. This will include staff costs, management fees and expenditure on communication. The LSP Manager to be given approval to action expenditure of up to £2000, with the approval of the Chair and Deputy Chair, anything above this to require the explicit approval of the Board. In addition, the current budget should be restructured in line with good practice to accommodate new funding streams.

11.2 The current financial position is in line with that previously reported to the Board in December; there have been no significant areas of additional unplanned expenditure. However the completion of recruitment, as agreed previously by the Board, of the LSP Manager and the remaining Administrative Support Officer means that a full complement of staff is now in place.

12.0 CONCLUSION

12.1 This report sets out a large number of key actions to get the architecture and structures of the Board, and partnership, onto a firmer footing in order to deliver the improvements to both systems and outcomes that the Board has requested.

12.2 In a number of areas further guidance is requested from the Board in order to progress issues. The report however remains a complex document. The Board may wish to agree the recommendations and provide comment on the issues raised, passing work on their practical implementation to the Steering Group. This is particularly pressing in the area of suggestions for key personnel to make up the Task and Finish Teams.

12.3 If all the recommendations are eventually agreed this will form a challenging work programme for the partnership in the short and medium term, and will require significant support from all the agencies involved in order for it to be delivered.