



24<sup>th</sup> February 2006

LSP Consultation  
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
Zone 5 K10  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

Dear Sir or Madam

**RE: Local Strategic Partnerships:  
Shaping their future - a consultation paper**

Set out below are the comments of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership on the consultation paper 'Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future.'

1. The role of LSPs and Sustainable Community Strategies

Epping Forest LSP is proud of the progress that it has made, and also proud of the fact that in a non NRF two tier structure, as a district level LSP it has developed the strategy which is jointly owned and was widely consulted upon. It has in place a good performance monitoring system, which is in advance of a number of other LSPs in Essex including the County LSP. LSP development in our county has largely followed the "separatist model" outlined in paragraph 67 of your document. Against this background we have no fundamental difficulty with any of the proposals set out in the section on the role of local strategic partnerships and sustainable community strategies.

In response to specific questions you raise we believe every local authority area should have its own LSP. Secondly we believe the establishment of greater delineation between County and District LSPs is very sensible and we would prefer the model that combines the aggregation model (where District level community strategies are aggregated to form an overarching strategy at County level), combined with an added value model for those areas of responsibility for which the County has authority. This would seem to us to create the best method of joint working between the tiers, and to prevent duplication that we believe blights the existing two tier arrangements.

We would point out that joint working is inevitably time consuming and we will come to a question of resources later. We believe that greater clarity over the

roles of different tiers of LSP would be very helpful and save significant duplication.

We agree with the suggestion that it is more appropriate in two tier areas for the responsibility for neighbourhood engagement to rest with the District level LSP. We also believe that this is the best way of engaging and ensuring the neighbourhood/parish voice and we believe our LSP has gone some way towards achieving this.

2. Governance

We believe that LAA arrangements are important. However, at the same time, they miss out on significant sections of important areas of partnership working for local communities and we would therefore argue that local partnership internal structural arrangements are best left to those partnerships.

The important issue is delivery and if the LAA is monitored closely by the ODPM it is highly likely that partnership structures will develop in a relatively similar way without the need for an overt structure set out in either guidance or legislation.

On the question of ensuring wide representation we believe that in two tier areas the more responsibility rests with District level local strategic partnerships, the more likely wide representation across the whole two-tier area is likely to happen and be effectively undertaken.

We believe that a duty of cooperation should be placed on PCTs, Learning and Skills Councils, colleges, the Education Authority, the Police, Parishes and Town Councils, NHS Trusts, and Foundation Trusts and in two tier areas County Councils with District LSPs and District Councils with County LSPs. We believe that duty should include responsibility for appropriate funding of the local strategic partnership.

3. Accountability

We believe that provided the nature of partnerships is clear (i.e. they are not simply a means by which local authorities try to more directly control all services in their area) then it is desirable that executive Councillors be included within LSPs if they are to be fully effective.

At the same time back benchers have an important role in bringing along neighbourhoods and communities which they represent and in influencing the LSP on behalf of those neighbourhoods and communities and each LSP needs to find a way of enabling this to happen.

We believe that LSPs across the county have tried many different ways of improving accountabilities of local businesses. There is no one solution and just as with communication LSPs need to keep trying different methods as often as possible of engaging with the communities they service.

The LSP supports the Government's intention to reduce national targets and allow LSPs greater scope for innovation and collaboration, as reflected in the LAA approach.

4. Capacity Issues

LSPs need to develop a more executive function in order to deal with the increase in bureaucracy that they face, and to ensure that they are effective in terms of delivery. To this end LSPs need to increase their managerial functions and focus.

We were dismayed by paragraph 137 that suggests that no additional resource would be available to LSPs to develop their ability to monitor and deliver services. Epping Forest LSP is currently funded through the contribution of some, but not all, of its partners. We believe LSPs in non NRF areas are in a tough position financially because it is difficult for hard pressed agencies to identify funding for an organisation which does not have a legal requirement to deliver, or have capacity so to do outside of the individual capacity of each partner. We believe there needs to be significant investment in infrastructure for non NRF LSPs to make a step change in their infrastructure and organisation in order to improve performance to the level identified in the consultation proposals.

Whilst we accept that it may be an interest to partners to provide more funding for a local strategic partnership operating at the level proposed, we believe that there needs to be at least pump priming funding to local agencies in the first instance.

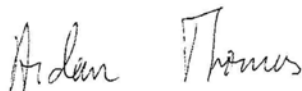
5. Conclusion

Overall Epping Forest LSP is proud of the level of achievement for the benefit of its community we have attained locally, and sees the potential for further joint development of strategy and delivery in our district.

Overall we are therefore supportive of the proposals in the consultation but at the same time concerned at the implications for the relationship between district and County partnerships, and in particular the issues around the funding of partnerships in the light of what they may in future be expected to deliver.

I hope these comments are of use to the consultation, please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.

Yours faithfully



AIDAN THOMAS  
Chair  
Epping Forest LSP