



CRITICAL FRIEND

the role of scrutiny in the world of partnerships



Mark Palmer, David Williams OBE and Neil Davies at the PtP Annual Conference – see back page

An important role for elected members in the scrutiny of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) is developing. New scrutiny powers in the latest legislation give councillors the opportunity to challenge LSPs about whether or not they really deliver.

Progress through Partnership (PtP) is working with members to use scrutiny as a way to act as a critical friend to partnerships and ensure they make a difference to the local area.

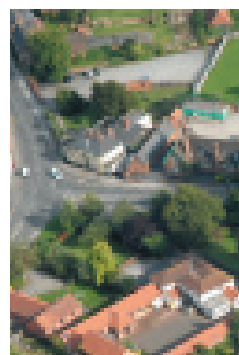
Although LSPs are non-statutory, and are sometimes criticised as 'talking shops', they have a major, over-arching role and a statutory right to exercise power. LSPs oversee the production of the Strategic Community Strategy (SCS) and the Local Area Agreement (LAA). To do this, they must operate within a complex web of networks and partnerships throughout

their area. The new powers of Overview and Scrutiny focus on accountability in the delivery of LAA targets and encourage joined up scrutiny within two tier areas.

PtP has supported a unitary authority on scrutiny of the LSP and LAA and is planning to support a two-tier area looking at joint area-based scrutiny. We have also developed a two hour module on scrutiny successfully trialled with two LSPs in the region.

For more information contact Mark Palmer at PtP mark@seemp.co.uk

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COORDINATING STRATEGIC PLANNING

the Epsom & Ewell experience

Epsom & Ewell Local Strategic Partnership has been using the capacity development money made available via PtP to support the review of the Borough's Community Strategy. This process is being actively driven forward by Sara Thakkar, chair of the LSP and Chief Executive of Rosebery Housing Association.

The original Strategy was adopted in April 2003 and the initial actions covered the period up to March 2008. The LSP knew it had to review the Strategy and embarked on a more fundamental reassessment of the Borough and its needs as these stood in 2008.

The first step was to commission Shared Intelligence to undertake a Scoping Review. This drew together all of the partners' individual strategies and long-term business plans for the first time in one place. It was recognised that any objectives in a new Community Strategy were unlikely to come to fruition if they did not already figure in some form in existing documents, if only in a general sense. Further, it was known that these plans were based on a variety of

consultation approaches taken by agencies to establish the broader community needs and priorities, including such mechanisms as focus groups and questionnaires.

Seeing for ourselves

However, the aim was not simply to collect together existing and established views from partners but also to create a new long-term Vision for the Borough which partners could identify with. This would also be used to influence future resource allocation.

One of the most significant events on the road to developing the new Strategy was an all-day workshop in June for LSP members, preceded by an evening tour of

the Borough. Rather than just sitting in a committee room in the Town Hall discussing what mattered, partners were able to see at first hand the unique and varied character of the Borough. This developed a shared commitment and new-found energy to maintain the attractive blend of high quality suburban development with large tracts of green open spaces. The collective ideas were drawn together on the following day by consultant John Haward, fulfilling the role of external facilitator. The outcome was a document that covered all of the ideas, challenges and potential priorities.

The positive aspects of the Borough had already been identified in the Core Strategy, developed and adopted under the Local Development Framework. Epsom & Ewell is one of the first authorities in the country to have secured an approved Core Strategy. This is due, in no small part, to the extent to which it built on the contents and objectives of the original Community Strategy. The need to develop a complementary approach between the spatial planning interests and the Community Strategy has been a

continuing thread in the LSP's journey, with cross-referencing taking place at every significant stage. Mark Berry, the Borough Council's Head of Planning is a key member of the LSP.

The LDF is seen as essential element in the mechanism to deliver the desired outcomes of the SCS in the long term. This will work alongside the directing and aligning of the individual partner agencies own resources to deliver the immediate actions on the priority topics.

Challenge

Another factor in developing the emerging document is the intention to adopt a joint approach with the Surrey Strategic Partnership to include the Local Area Agreement topics and the broader aspects of the Surrey Community Strategy. Given the two-tier nature of local government in Surrey, this presents a serious challenge, not yet fully overcome, that seeks to ensure that actions are assigned to an appropriate level and that the work is complementary rather than duplicated or, at worse, contradictory.

Given that the LSP doubles up as the Epsom & Ewell Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, the LAA will have particular relevance for local community safety matters, but will also relate to environmental sustainability and a variety of social aspects. Furthermore, a particularly interesting aspect is how the work focusing on health and employment/life skills will operate across the two tiers in the two separate areas of relative deprivation in the Borough.

In December, a briefing evening was held to give Borough Councillors the opportunity to input into the developing SCS. The current Key Priorities for the Council mirror many of the emerging themes for the SCS, most notably the wish protect and enhance the visual appearance of the

'The LSP has expressed a clear wish to validate with its community the Vision and the emerging priorities before the Strategy is finalised. Measures to achieve this end are currently being explored'
Sarah Thakkar, Chair

Revised LSP structure

At its meeting on 3rd December, the LSP adopted the outline framework for the new SCS and this is now being developed to produce a final version of the Strategy. This document will establish clear priorities for partnership working and an action plan for implementation for 2009/10 and future years.

However, the LSP has expressed a clear wish to validate with its community the Vision and the emerging priorities before the Strategy is finalised. Measures to achieve this end are currently being looked at. It is recognised that the delivery of the new SCS will need a revised LSP structure in the future in order to ensure good leadership, along with an appropriate level of decision-making and accountability. There will need to be the right mix of skills and accessible resources available to the Partnership in order to ensure the effective implementation of the new Strategy.

For further details, contact Andrew Eperson, Head of Policy & Partnerships, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council: aeperson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk.



RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

where partnerships can make a difference

It is well-recognised that climate change cannot be tackled by a single agency alone: partnership working is the only option for delivering significant and sustainable change. Global warming is a truly cross-cutting issue which requires a joined-up response.

A growing challenge

Pressure on the south east region over the issue is set to build with the government's creation of the new Department for Energy and Climate Change in October, and the passage into law of three major new pieces of legislation – the Climate Change, Energy and Planning Bills. The Acts are intended to facilitate the UK's transition to a low-carbon economy, deliver a long-term, secure energy supply, and enshrine in law targets to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent.

According to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), 'the south east has potentially more to gain – and certainly more to lose – from climate change than any other region in the UK'. The region has by far the highest rate of carbon emissions and energy use in the UK, and is projected to experience much greater change (in all weather variables) than the north west. Transport in particular the road network and aviation are significant factors which will need to change.



Climate change in Local Area Agreements

Tackling climate change is one of the top Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets for the south east of England. Of the 199 National Indicators, three are directly on climate change and a number are related. Ranked third across the south east region is NI 186: Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in a local authority area. This includes emissions from every community and sector in an area, including those of the local authority. Almost every LAA in the south east region (15 of 19) have this indicator. The other two key indicators are NI185 (CO2 reduction from local authority operations) and NI188 (Planning to adapt to climate change).

In addition, a number of other indicators relate to climate change, such as NI187: Tackling fuel poverty – percentage of people receiving income-based benefits living in homes with a low efficiency rating.

Raising the heat among partners

The target of improving the fuel-efficiency of homes – thereby improving people's chances of good health, and reducing cost of living – is tackled for people on benefits in the government's Warm Front scheme. Gloucestershire Warm and Well targets owner-occupiers of private rented housing in Gloucestershire who could be vulnerable to health problems caused by low indoor temperatures. Developed by the Severn Wye Energy Agency on behalf of the local authorities in the county in 2000/01, the scheme has delivered energy efficiency improvements to 14,489 properties to date.

Diana Billingham, County Partnerships Manager at Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust, said: 'We worked really hard in going round all the strategic partnerships to discuss the Warm and Well scheme – until decision-makers realised how good it is and that it works. Two targets in our LAA flowed directly from that work.'

LSPs come into their own over such major issues: local authorities alone can feel they do not have sufficient levers to act. Challenged as to whether or not local government should be given additional powers and resources to deal with climate change, Defra's answer is no. 'Local authorities already have

wide ranging powers to act on climate change. What is sometimes needed is creativity in exploiting existing powers ... Local authorities are also in a strong position to influence their communities through local strategic partnerships, direct communication and other means'.

A key role for local businesses

Gosport's 2026 Vision in the Sustainable Community Strategy includes the aim that 'the community will be taking positive action to reduce its use of natural resources and minimise climate change. Local people, services and businesses will be reducing their carbon footprint.' A number of companies are enthusiastic members of the Gosport Partnership, including Stanford Press, the Gosport Ferry, and First Buses. 'Their motivation is not hard to fathom', says Johanna Hamilton coordinator of the Partnership: 'Our targets simply mean better business for them.'

'Climate change is a complex and challenging agenda for LSPs', says Tim Houghton, chair of the Gosport Transport and Sustainability Partnership. 'By bringing together businesses, transport providers, cycle groups, planners and highway authorities we have found that the resources, expertise and will to change behaviours exist already and it is now a matter of deploying them imaginatively through partnership working.'

For further details see www.ukcip.org.uk

SHARING INFORMATION

Local Climate Impacts Profile

One tool which enables LSPs to work more effectively together on climate change is the Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP), piloted by the UK Climate Change Impacts Programme (UKCIP) with Oxfordshire County Council. It comprises a four-stage piece of research on actual past weather events – starting from records in the area's local media – which can be done quickly, with a limited resource commitment.

An LCLIP enables the local authority and LSP to share evidence in an accessible format, understand weaknesses in current responses, and identify critical thresholds for analysing future climate scenarios. In the longer term it can be the basis for a more extensive information and monitoring system which links current performance to decision-making for the future. In the south east, work on LCLIPs has been done by Bournemouth Borough Council and Kent County Council. Mike Peveril from the East Midlands Regional Assembly is co-ordinating regional LCLIP work in the East Midlands that extends to LSP partners.

Kent County Council completed a pilot LCLIP in 2007 that included data from various LSP partners and was used to inform and build the case for including NI 188 in their LAA. An overview by Alison Cambrey, 'Adapting to climate change in Kent: combining an LCLIP and NI 188 to take action across a local strategic partnership' is available on the UKCIP website.

The scope of the LCLIP was over ten years (1997-2007), and it involved making a record of the top 50 most significant weather impacts, by category, in Kent in that period. Although time constraints meant that the resulting data could not all be analysed, the LSP felt they was compelling enough to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of preparing for impacts within KCC and across the LSP;
- Identify climate change as not 'just' an environmental issue, but as relevant to all LSP partners;
- Alert partners to the need for better data-sharing across the LSP;
- Make some initial policy changes in KCC;
- Justify a call for NI 188 to be included in new Kent Agreement;
- Develop interest across LSP in developing the LCLIP further.

The same team is now doing a more detailed LSP-led LCLIP to inform delivery of NI 188, with inputs from all LSP partners. It will be used as a decision-support tool by all partners over the next few years. With a healthy representation of private sector partners ranging from the Federation of Small Businesses to Pfizer enabled through its LSP, Kent has faced up to the magnitude of the threat, predicted to affect Kent more extremely than any other county in the UK, and positioned itself well to meet its priority target.



Views from a Chairman



Name: Jeremy Leggett
Role: Chief Executive of Action in Rural Sussex and Chairman of the East Sussex Strategic Partnership

are often given no choice but to move away from where they have any family or social networks. However, for those with assets, their investment in the community in which they live remains unchanged, and provides a very strong incentive to engage. For some this can take a positive form and can drive an upswell of local action to tackle local needs. For others it can be more about pulling up the drawbridge and seeking to prevent any change; even if it is change that is needed by people who are not sharing in what has, until very recently, been a more general prosperity.

Does the LSP add anything to other channels of community engagement and, if so, what?

A county level Strategic Partnership would be fooling itself if it thought that it could bring about greater community engagement than anything else. If there is one thing that LSPs should be trying to do, especially now, it is to encourage statutory organisations to invest in the capacity of the wider community. Engagement is not about sitting in semi-formal consultation meetings, it is about getting involved locally and helping tackle local issues. This

needs resources, and they are often better spent by local community groups than statutory agencies.

How have you embedded the Local Area Agreement (LAA) within the work of the LSP?

As we are a county LSP, the LAA has become central to our work. We provide the partnership governance to an agreement that is shared amongst partners operating at county level; we also provide a key meeting place for the LAA's priorities on public service delivery and the District/Boroughs' priorities for spatial planning and development.

How does the LSP coordinate the consideration of LAA priorities with those from the boroughs?

We negotiate. In particular we negotiate based on the agreed broad priorities that we have already captured in our Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). We are all in this county together and we cannot allow any preciousness about administrative boundaries get in the way of deciding priorities together.

Are there any issues in East Sussex which are NOT measured by the National Indicator Set and are NOT practicable for the LSP to deal

“Can I say how fortunate we are with our members from the Voluntary Sector and the Chairs that they have provided. They have challenged us elected members in our main role which is to make difficult choices back in our Councils, because often we find ourselves having to ‘rob Peter to pay Paul.’”
 Cllr Bob Tidy, Vice Chair, ESSP

Please introduce yourself.

My day job is Chief Executive of Action in Rural Sussex, the Rural Community Council in Sussex, and I have been involved in the East Sussex Strategic Partnership since it was set up. I became Chair of the Executive Board two years ago and, if my colleagues on the Board wish to keep me, I believe I could have another two years to run.

What are the main trends in community engagement in East Sussex?

In Sussex, especially rural Sussex, we have seen over a number of years changes to the way in which people become engaged. We also have a very different picture across the age ranges. Even with recent notional falls, house prices have risen to levels that defy logic in relation to the local economy and this has had a very damaging effect on the ability of people starting out on the journey through adult life to get a foot on the ladder. This has major consequences for their ability to get engaged in their community. With absurd mortgage payments to find, young families have little energy left for anything else and

with, which could potentially fall through the net?

These are two questions masquerading as one! The LAA is a short-term, partial, measurement lead and full of holes. It also represents a small, almost random, sample of the things that could be measured to judge the success of the partners working together to meet local needs. Many of our issues are long term, for example, infrastructure, climate change, and demographic change, and the LAA is not designed for this. Our SCS is designed to look longer term and our current challenge is to enable it to guide towards joint action and joint solutions.

How do you evaluate LSP delivery?

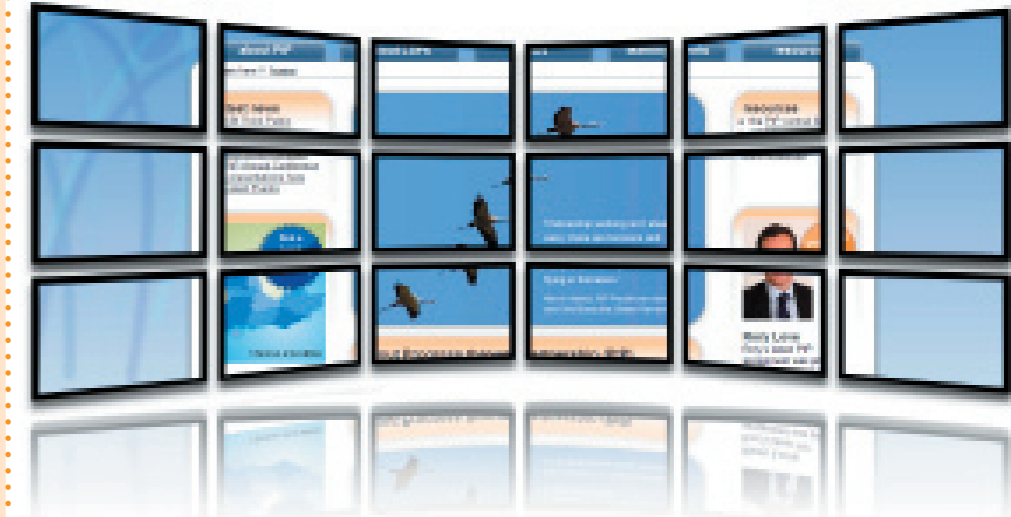
The ESSP does not itself deliver: this strange misunderstanding is often repeated in government guidance and is a major problem. Partners deliver, and the ESSP coordinates, monitors and enables strategy to be reviewed in an integrated and holistic way.

What role do elected members currently have in the scrutiny of the LSP, and what further role do you consider they could have?

Great question! I believe that true partnership working will only work if those around the table are as fully empowered as possible to work with others. Everyone sitting around the ESSP table is empowered by their organisations in one way or another, including representatives of local authorities. If local authorities set out to achieve progressive, forward-looking outcomes for their whole community then they will have good grounds on which to scrutinise what their Cabinet members do to achieve this through partnerships. I am sure that non-local-authority members of LSPs will always be keen to help ‘backbenchers’ with this task.

The views of the author may not necessarily represent those of PtP and the Host Agencies, South East Employers and Shared Intelligence.

PtP goes multi-media

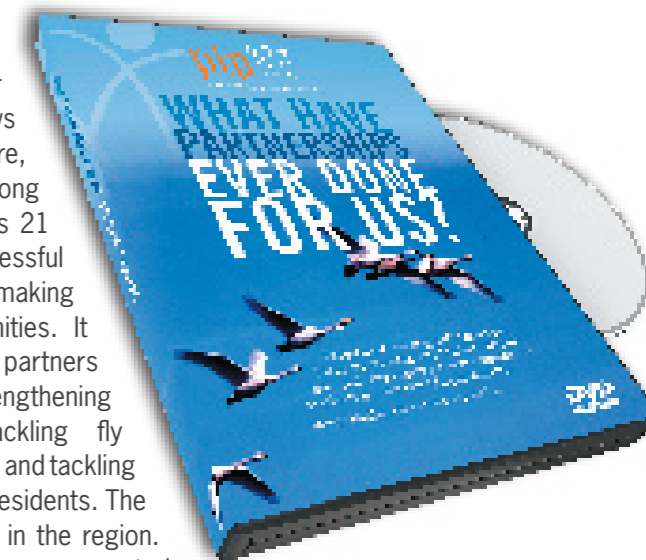


New website

The PtP website has been re-vamped to make it more user-friendly and easier to navigate. You can still access information about individual LSPs, the latest news and upcoming events. Under the ‘Resources’ section, you will also find interesting publications, interviews and case studies and easy-to-follow guidance and toolkits, as well as details of the PtP Practitioner Associate service and Central Fund. A new section provides information on LSPs from a number of different perspectives: for elected members, the LSP chairperson, third sector/lay readers and LSP practitioners. Further new additions include a Frequently Asked Questions section, a glossary of acronyms, and a jargon-buster. To see the new website in action, visit www.progressthroughpartnership.org.uk. If you have any further suggestions on what should up there, please contact Alison alison@seemp.co.uk.

New DVD

‘What have partnerships ever done for us?’ features views from Cllr David Shakespeare, Vice Chair of the LGA among other leading LSP figures. This 21 minute film showcases successful partnership activities that are making a real difference to communities. It includes examples of where partners have worked together on: strengthening community engagement, tackling fly tipping, supporting lone parents and tackling quality of life issues with local residents. The DVD is being sent to all LSPs in the region. ‘The people who have seen it have commented on the high standard. From my perspective I think that the guys turned out a really great product’ – Simon Bland, Community Liaison Manager, Reigate and Banstead. For extra copies contact Emily at PtP on emily@seemp.co.uk.



PtP adding value



A recent evaluation of PtP found that it is delivering real benefits for LSP practitioners across the south east.

The evaluation was commissioned by Medway Council as PtP's accountable body and conducted by Intelligent Commissioning Services (ICS) during July and August 2008. It involved in-depth interviews and focus groups with elected members, LSP managers, partners and staff working with regional bodies.

The findings showed that the programme has provided significant capacity building support to LSP practitioners, improved relationships between and within LSPs and added value by effectively coordinating LSP support in the region and leveraging in additional resources for LSPs. The peer-led focus and breadth and flexibility of the

programme were highlighted as particular strengths, along with the Central Fund resource and the Practitioner Associate service. Another benefit of the programme is that it fosters positive working relationships among peers through the sub regional networks that it supports. For example, the Oxfordshire LSP Officers' group has recently increased the frequency of its meetings from quarterly to monthly: in the recent PtP conference presentation, its coordinator Claire Evans described it as important as a support group, as a forum for best practice and news, and for developing coordinated approaches to developing the LAA. The programme has achieved a good spread across a large region and has been well received by practitioners.

An ongoing challenge for PtP – as well as for the south east's LSPs – is to better engage elected members in the work of LSPs, and increase the involvement of non-local-authority partners.

IN BRIEF

PtP Conference

The PtP Annual Conference provides a unique platform for movers and shakers in the LSP community, whatever their sector or status. This year it was held at The Brit Oval, London, on 11th November. Three elected members were given an opportunity to share their views on the importance of the LSP agenda: Cllr David Williams OBE, who spoke on community empowerment and partnership development, Cllr Keith Mitchell CBE on experiences in Oxfordshire, and Cllr Rory Love on the scrutiny of partnerships.

All presentations are up on our website www.progressthroughpartnership.org.uk (see Learning events / PtP Annual Conference).

Visioning Roundtable: Migrant Workers

20th January 2009
Jurys Inn, Southampton

This is the first in a series of roundtable discussions for Chief Executives and strategic leaders from local authorities and partner agencies. It will explore how local agencies can work together to maximise the positive impacts of migration and respond to the challenges.

For a programme or to register contact Emily Parrett emily@seemp.co.uk



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