

North West Surrey Authorities

Statement of Intent for achieving improved partnership working

North West Surrey is made up of three local authorities – Runnymede, Spelthorne and Surrey Heath Borough Councils. These authorities have much in common, located around the M3 and M25, and having a mix of small and medium sized towns within their boundaries. More than 250,000 people live in the North West Area.

The three local authorities want to explore further areas of joint working which will result in service, quality and unit cost improvements for residents, users and customers.

This Statement of Intent describes the guiding principles for developing stronger partnership working between the three councils. Additionally it outlines the structure by which the initial scoping and plans can be developed for improved partnership arrangements and the next steps required.

Crucially, this Statement of Intent provides a clear expression of the policy, service, political and managerial justification for enhancing existing arrangements and striving to do more.

Objectives

- i. Improve the quality and value for money of service to communities
- ii. Ensure resilience of service delivery
- iii. Contribute to the Local and Central Government efficiency gains programme
- iv. Secure the optimisation of vehicles, plant and property assets
- v. Provide opportunities for trading in the medium to longer term
- vi. Create a stronger voice for the area on strategic issues
- vii. Provide a procurement focus for other public bodies in North West Surrey

Underlying Principles

- i. The partnership(s) must not compromise the independence of decision making in each council or dilute identity, and ultimate accountability
- ii. The governance of the partnership includes both Members and Officers
- iii. Concentration should be on outcomes and benefits rather than processes, including customer service, quality standards and service resilience
- iv. In assessing new partnership opportunities, the councils should look first to one another and where possible partnerships should provide benefits for all three councils
- v. Developments should accommodate existing partnership arrangements

- vi. There should be continued exploration of partnership/joint working with other public, voluntary and private sector partners as long as adherence to principle (ii) has been demonstrated
- vii. A programme of partnership opportunities be developed with tangible achievements from 2006/07
- viii. Where a project, within the programme, is between two of the partners an opportunity must be left open for the third to join at a later date

Next steps

To ensure that the Statement of Intent (and ultimately future joint working) is a success the following steps need to be taken:

- Establishing formal endorsement and internal commitment by nominating specific staff (e.g. Policy Officers) to support initial scoping and development
- As a priority, make bids for funding from external sources to support the initiative, for example:
 - Capacity Building Fund (£6m for the South East Region)
 - Regional Centre of Excellence
- Assessing the 'strategic fit' of the three councils, for example by reviewing corporate plans, the compatibility of areas of investment (and dis-investment), Annual Efficiency Statements, Procurement, Risk and ICT strategies.
- Jointly procure, where necessary, advice:
 - reviewing the 'strategic fit' of councils' strategies (see above)
 - developing evaluation criteria, option appraisals, business cases, etc.
 - potential efficiency gains and service improvements
 - introducing best practice from similar initiatives
 - seeking external funding and other opportunities
 - programme and project management
- Establishing a timetable for actions with milestones and a Member/senior manager review group (? meeting quarterly) to maintain progress on the policy goals.

(i) **Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future - general**

The central role of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is to produce and deliver a community strategy. The LSP sets out the vision for an area and drives the delivery of local services. The LSP is the partnership of partnerships and can act as both an advisor and commissioner of services.

Advisory LSPs tend to have large memberships and work towards building consensus and making recommendations. A commissioning LSP makes decisions and is actively involved in the delivery of the community strategy. In the future LSPs will increasingly move to a commissioning role.

Local Strategic Partnerships have been successful in establishing a collective vision and a coordinated community strategy, but the main challenge for LSPs is mapping partners' spending programmes and pooling budgets.

Suggested response:

"There needs to be greater clarity as to what specific role government sees LSPs discharging and how this will fit into the governance arrangements for various public sector bodies operating within the area and the specific relationship with local government structures which have democratic legitimacy.

LSPs need to provide a clear view of the role of the partnership and the expectations of all partners, including the private, voluntary and community sectors. Clarity of purpose can help speed up the partnership-forming process and ensure that the necessary internal structures are in place.

With the whole of the public sector under very substantial financial pressures, there has to be an acknowledgement that partner organisations need financial support to enable effective participation in LSPs.

Experience elsewhere in the public sector (e.g. Education and School Governor roles) suggests there is not a ready pool of people wanting to assume the complex obligations associated with delivery/commission roles."

(ii) **Sustainable Community Strategies**

- Developing a common vision for a more sustainable future is important and it is crucial that this information is based on an in-depth analysis of specific needs of the area and results in priorities which must be able to translate into meaningful outcomes. Many community strategies tend to contain little evidence to back up proposed actions. They tend to rely largely on community aspirations and make few references to available baseline data.
- There should be a system in place for monitoring the community strategy
- Re-shaping community strategies to sustainable community strategies with the emphasis on local leaders taking a more cross-disciplinary approach to social, economic and environmental issues.
- Sustainable community strategies should be influenced by the content of other key local, regional and sub-regional plans. The development of LAAs has brought LSPs and regional and sub-regional bodies into a closer working relationship. This means that there is greater opportunity for sustainable community strategies,

regional spatial strategies, regional economic strategies and regional sustainable development frameworks to be more closely aligned.

- It is essential that mechanisms and activities at neighbourhood level are linked effectively with decision-making and planning at the strategic local level. They also need to reflect national priorities such as those relating to planning or housing. The LSP will have an important facilitating role in supporting neighbourhood engagement, listening to the views of neighbourhoods in a locality and ensuring that neighbourhoods can influence wider priorities in service delivery and the allocation of resources.
- The Local Development Framework (LDF) must be a key component in the delivery of the sustainable community strategy, setting out its spatial aspects and providing a long-term spatial vision. To ensure that the LDF can become the spatial expression of the sustainable community strategy links need to be made throughout the process.

Suggested response:

“There needs to be a recognition that arrangements reflect local circumstances and the differential inputs potentially from partner organisations and groups. The key consideration is that the Community Strategy has evolved after the most extensive and legitimate public consultation, engagement and focus group type work. The Local Development Framework seeks to reflect the spatial considerations of the Community Strategy and it is acknowledged that there will be a need to move towards a Sustainable Community Strategy over time. This must not, however, break the “golden thread” that presently exists as between the results of the public consultation exercises that led to the formation of the Community Strategy or the subsequent development of key elements of the Local Development Framework. The most beneficial role of the LSP is to develop the vision that is now embodied in Community Strategies, as well as acting as its guardian against top down direction and ensuring that the evidence base for the Strategy, targets and planned outcomes is adhered to.

The review/refreshment of the Vision/Community Strategy should be determined at local level, rather than prescribing annual or three yearly reviews. It should reflect changes that are being evidenced within the community, as too regular reviews will simply result in some of the long term structural, social and attitudinal changes that are implicit in many Community Strategy documents being lost. It is not felt appropriate that the Community Strategy Implementation Plan and the Local Area Agreement should become one and the same. Their genesis is different and in the Surrey context the LAA is unlikely to be as over arching as the Community Strategy.

Whilst it is understood that the Local Community Strategy and LSP needs to reflect aspects of regional and sub-regional plans, the eventual development of sustainable Community Strategy priorities should not result in a top down direction, but still maintain the integrity of bottom up community aspirations that have always laid at the heart of the Community Strategy/LSP concept.

On the issue of neighbourhood engagement, it is only credible for District level LSPs to have responsibility for neighbourhood engagement. In parished areas clearly there is a role for parish and town councils.”

(iii) Two-tier Working

- A possible model in two-tier areas could be to develop a strategic sustainable community strategy at county level, with a remit to

engage with regional, sub-regional tiers and district authorities/LSPs to reflect their priorities. District level LSPs could then focus on local/neighbourhood engagement and establishing and analysis of the needs of their population.

Suggested Response:

"Having regard to the neighbourhood and localism agenda, and the roles of democratically elected local councillors, it seems essential that every local authority area has its own Local Strategic Partnership.

As regards prescribing arrangements as between County and District LSPs, it seems to make sense to require District/Borough based LSPs to reflect those topics/priorities/aspirations of the County Community Strategy in local targets, as has been successfully pursued in other two-tier areas. The maintenance of two types of Community Strategies/LSP groupings is confusing to other public sector partners, voluntary and charitable sector and other community representatives, as well as occasioning some duplication and a great deal of additional resource input."

(iv) Governance

- LSPs should be the overarching partnership in a locality bringing together all local thematic partnerships. The local authority's involvement is vital to the effective operation of an LSP and is accountable for LSP actions. The local authority needs to ensure that there is appropriate representation across the different sectors including involving local residents; and scrutinising the LSP.
- The basic structure of an LSP should include some form of executive board, which is able to take strategic decisions, underpinned by the local thematic partnerships which will need to feed into the board and which will effectively be the delivery mechanisms for the LSP. The board will need to be made up of all the key interests in an area: elected representatives, the local authority chief executive, senior public sector officials, voluntary, community and business sector representatives and local residents.
- Local public service boards which bring together major public sector partners in the locality to map and influence public expenditure, and service delivery partnerships which focus on the delivery of specific issues under the umbrella of the LSP are two approaches towards effective governance arrangements.
- Local Area Agreements put LSPs at the centre of negotiation, delivery and monitoring of the priority outcomes in the area. Clustering around the thematic areas enables a more focussed approach, but LSPs are best placed when focused on issues that best meet local needs.
- It is important that representatives from the voluntary and community sector are included on the LSPs and relevant sub-groups, both in their roles as service deliverers and as representatives of the local community. Representatives need to reflect all the community including a diverse range of minority voluntary and community sector interests.
- As LSPs move towards a greater delivery co-ordination role it is important to consider whether to set them on a firmer footing by

clarifying and formalising their role and providing some form of legislative foundation.

Suggested Response:

"There needs to be a recognition that demographic changes and economic pressures are placing very considerable pressures on the voluntary and charitable sectors' capacity to input to this agenda.

The proposal to rationalise all partnerships around the LSP has no regard to local circumstances, sensitivities or needs. Clustering around the LAA activity blocks seems at odds with the government's stated role of LAAs as administering pooled funding streams from government departments. In the case of Surrey for all practical purposes, there is only one such funding stream (e.g. Home Office – Crime Reduction Strategy) as most other funding streams are based on deprivation factors for which Surrey would not qualify.

The concept of bringing partnerships together under well understood delivery themes has merit, but only if they can be demonstrated of relevance locally.

Geographic boundaries and general issues of co-terminosity can be an impediment to effective partnership working, but equally can be overstated. They are often only partially relevant to residents' views of what constitutes their neighbourhood as their focus for activities and interests will breach administrative boundaries. The biggest constraint remains the capacity and flexibility available within partner organisations and individual representatives.

Prescription as to participation in LSPs for public agencies would seem unhelpful. The key requirement is to ensure negotiated buy-in to specific outcomes from statutory partners and voluntary and community sectors.

(v) Thematic Blocks

- Children and young people – the partnership vehicle are children's trusts. The local authority is responsible for the production of a children's and young people's plan and should both inform and take account of the sustainable community strategy.
- Safer and stronger communities – the major partnership is the crime and disorder reduction partnership.
- Economic development – partnerships in this block are not prescribed at a national level.
- Healthier communities - partnerships in this block are not prescribed at a national level.
- Environmental - partnerships in this block are not prescribed at a national level.

Suggested Response:

"The temptation of government to be prescriptive as to key themes should be resisted. Issues identified and pursued should have local legitimacy, reference and endorsement, even if they may seem similar to those themes outlined by government."

(vi) Accountability

- Clear accountability requires mutually understood and accepted ways of working, internal performance management to check progress and external scrutiny.
- Within the LSP, each partner is responsible for the actions that they agree to undertake, and as such are accountable for the delivery of those actions to the LSP, to their parent organisation and to the local community. Formal agreements or protocols between partners can be an effective way of ensuring clarity about who is responsible for the different elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA delivery.
- Partnership agreements can define the role of the partnership, its Terms of Reference, and the expected and agreed contribution from all partners. This might include seniority of those attending, financial and staff contributions to the operation of the partnership.
- For LSPs to be effective the local community, voluntary and private sectors must be engaged and their needs, priorities and views taken into account. LSPs need to be actively involving councillors, residents and community representatives in their decision making process.
- LSPs have a responsibility to inform users and local communities how the LSP works, where responsibility and accountability lie, and how complaints can be made. Local authorities are required to consult with local stakeholders when producing the community strategy.
- It is crucial residents are involved and under the LAA and LDF the local authority is required to set out how the local community is involved in determining priorities and actions.

Suggested Response:

“With such a significant resource being applied in the LSP/LAA agenda, it is proper that such partnerships clearly set out membership, governance and reporting arrangements.

Inspection regimes and assessment criteria for other public sector bodies do in some cases include a specific evaluation of effective partnership working. This could be a requirement in all inspectoral regimes.

There should be clarity as to what the LSP is about and the expected input from partners and others. However, the LSP should not be seen to usurp the representative, community engagement, scrutiny and challenge roles of democratically elected local councillors. Councillors play an effective role within the LSP framework and provide important links into the local authorities’ policy and decision making processes, as well as in the communities they represent. This should not be altered without a clear and demonstrable improvement in public participation and democratic accountability.”

(vii) Capacity

- With the shift in role towards co-ordinating delivery for all LSPs, their capacity is increasingly becoming important.

- LSPs need to develop new skills to include performance management, planning, data collection, analyses, use of evidence in evaluation, influencing collaboration skills.
- Budgetary support specifically allocated to developing Community Strategies is patchy.
- Support for LSPs is expected to be provided by partner organisations from within existing budgets.
- There is a wide range of support and training available for partners of LSPs, both specifically and as part of the wider Local Government Capacity Building programme.
- Specific and specialist skills can be drawn from within existing partner organisations.

Suggested Response:

"All the representatives participating in the LSP, whether from statutory organisations, voluntary and charitable sectors, business or academic institutions, find the time and associated commitments problematic. This is even in LSPs where there is genuine enthusiasm and a wish to achieve targets/outcomes. The Consultation Paper does not recognise that for many partner organisations the LSP is but one of a myriad of external liaison, partnership and other collaborative work often needing input from middle and senior personnel. The government could usefully rationalise demands from its own spending departments, government office, regional and arm's length agencies, so as to be clear what priority should be applied by local partner organisations.

If, as seems to be suggested, the role of LSP should develop into some corporate, commissioning and delivery mechanism, then very substantial additional skills and specific resourcing will be required."

APPENDIX 'C'

Options	Opportunities	Risks	Budgetary Implications
<p>A. Note the results of the Job Evaluation exercise and the potential organisational implications of the various options. To restate the Council's strategic aim of achieving upper quartile salaries and to undertake a market comparison exercise to ensure this is achieved. To undertake an equal pay audit. To assimilate staff on fixed point salaries into salary scales. To review criteria for grading appeals. To decide outstanding grading applications by 31 March 2006. To assess any new regrading applications within 3 months of application.</p>	<p>Avoidance of significant staff disruption, costs and adverse effect on services. Ensures staff recruitment and retention by enhanced reference to market factors. Addresses any equality issues. Resolves single status issues. Aids grading appeals considerations. Quickens processing of regrading applications. Ultimately simplifies and unifies salary structure.</p>	<p>Adverse reaction from many staff at having spent a considerable amount of time in preparing for Job Evaluation. Disappointment by some staff who had anticipated benefits deriving from the introduction of Job Evaluation. Assimilation of ex Manual Worker bonus payments and allowances into base pay might present some operational difficulties in terms of productivity and attendance.</p>	<p>Within budget</p>
<p>B. Note the results of the Job Evaluation exercise and the potential organisational implications of the various options. To implement the Job Evaluation Scheme (Model 4) in respect of lower paid former Manual Workers (up to and including Scale L6A). To replace current 22 grades with 15. To restate the Council's strategic aim of achieving upper quartile salaries and to undertake a market comparison exercise to ensure this is achieved. To assimilate staff on fixed point salaries into salary scales. To undertake an</p>	<p>Would address Trade Union and CPA concerns on Single Status and any long term disadvantages experienced by these groups. Costs would be targeted. No staff would be 'downgraded' Aids grading appeals considerations. Quickens processing of regrading applications Simplified and unified salary structure</p>	<p>This could be seen as a half way solution that fails to address any inequalities at a more senior level in the organisation from whom equal pay claims could arise and could create problems by only dealing with part of the pay structure. Assimilation of ex Manual Worker bonus payments and allowances into base pay might present some operational difficulties in terms of productivity and attendance. In order to minimise 'downgradings' of current staff the scheme has been manipulated and could create problems for the future. A comparatively expensive solution for</p>	<p>Within budget</p>

<p>equal pay audit. To review criteria for grading appeals. To decide outstanding grading applications by 31 March 2006. To assess any new regrading applications within 3 months of application.</p>		<p>a minority of staff. Creation of salary differential issues with supervisory posts.</p>	
<p>C. Implement the Job Evaluation Scheme (Model 4) in its entirety but to withhold notice on downgraded staff until by staff turnover only 10% are affected.</p>	<p>Would provide a longer period of protection for staff and provide an additional cushion for the effects.</p>	<p>Longer protection period would result in additional costs. Disaffection from downgraded staff. A significant number of market supplements would need to be applied in order to recruit staff. In order to minimise 'downgradings' of current staff the scheme has been manipulated and could create problems for the future.</p>	<p>Dependent on rate of staff turnover but estimated at an additional £250,000 for a period of 3 years.</p>
<p>D. Implement the Job Evaluation Scheme (Model 4) in its entirety but with no additional protection for staff downgraded.</p>		<p>Reneging on assurance given to staff that no more than 10% would be downgraded with resultant adverse reaction and effect on staff turnover and services. Employer's reputation damaged and lower salaries resulting in recruitment difficulties. In order to minimise 'downgradings' of current staff the scheme has been manipulated and could create problems for the future.</p>	<p>An additional £150,000 p.a. at scale maxima.</p>
<p>E. Implement the Job Evaluation Scheme (Model 6) in its entirety.</p>	<p>Within the guaranteed maximum number of downgradings.</p>	<p>Budgetary implications. Many salaries being paid far in excess of market rates – potentially open to legal challenge. Disaffection from the 10% downgraded staff. In order to minimise 'downgradings' of current staff the scheme has been manipulated and could create problems for the future.</p>	<p>An additional £1m p.a. at scale maxima.</p>

F. Implement the Job Evaluation Scheme (Model 7).	Within the guaranteed maximum number of downgradings.	Budgetary implications. Complex. Not without risk of equal pay challenge. A significant number fall outside market rates.	An additional £600,000 p.a. at scale maxima.
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