

**STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP STUDY – SCOPING REPORT  
(Report by the Head of Administration)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Panel previously has expressed an interest in carrying out a study on the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership (HSP). This report contains information to enable the Panel to plan its study.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 places a duty on principal local authorities to prepare community strategies for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. It also gives authorities broad powers to improve and promote local well-being as a means of helping them to implement those strategies. The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities, in preparing community strategies, to consult and seek the participation of such organisations and people as they consider appropriate. This is undertaken by local strategic partnerships (LSP). There is no definitive approach to the way in which such LSPs should be structured, the bodies that should be represented, or the way in which the partnership should operate. That is a matter for the LSP itself to determine.
- 2.2 Local strategic partnerships are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships, which match local authority boundaries. LSPs bring together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. The HSP is Huntingdonshire's version of a local strategic partnership. Its structure comprises a Board (including Members), the Executive (officers) and a range of Thematic Groups. This structure and the terms of reference for each of its components appear at Appendix A.
- 2.3 The Thematic Groups have adopted various structures of their own. The Environment Forum, for example, is a stand alone body, while the Community Safety Partnership has its own Board, Executive and subordinate groupings. The Community Safety Partnership predates the HSP as it was established to comply with a requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 that local authorities and the police form crime and disorder reduction partnerships. On the basis of the public consultation undertaken to inform the Community Strategy the Community Safety Partnership was incorporated into the HSP. As such it can be seen that the Community Safety Partnership has complex responsibilities and reporting lines.

**3. THE STATUS OF LSPs**

- 3.1 The term "partnership" is widely but loosely used in relation to LSPs. It has been universally employed towards LSPs but nationally it has been recognised that the arrangements that have been put in place do not comply with the legal definition of "partnership". The term "collaboration" has come to be accepted as preferable. This is a useful distinction because it draws attention to the fact that partners

in the HSP do not have a duty to contribute towards achieving the Community Strategy. A model that has been developed to differentiate between the various kinds of relationships that have emerged, which might usefully be employed to understand the workings of LSPs, comprises three basic structures:

1. Goals based coalition – a coalition established between a local authority, other statutory bodies and other sectors of the community to develop common goals/objectives/strategies; crucially each party retains responsibility for its services;
2. Strategically co-ordinated services – joint service planning and provision, a partnership between different organisations to engage jointly in a service planning process that results in a strategic statement of objectives and plans and the commitment to coordinate better resource allocation and service delivery; and
3. Liaison body – a forum for information sharing/consultation.

It may become evident in the course of the study that elements of each type of engagement exist within the HSP.

#### **4. COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT**

- 4.1 Members will be aware that the Community Strategy is in the process of being reviewed and updated with a view to adopting the Sustainable Community Strategy. This coincides with and will contribute towards the introduction of arrangements to deliver the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA). At the same time extensive measures are being put in place to monitor and scrutinise the LPSA and, therefore, there may be little merit in scrutinising this directly. There are, however, a number of matters relating to the HSP may provide learning points for its future operation.

#### **3. POTENTIAL ISSUES FOR INVESTIGATION**

##### **Member Involvement**

- 3.1 Members are involved in the HSP in various ways from the Board to working groups at the lower levels. Patterns of representation may be something that the Panel could investigate.

##### **Resources**

- 3.2 The HSPs relationship to financial resources is something that could provide significant findings. In particular, Members may enquire whether each element in the structure has access to a budget, where any funding comes from, how budgets are allocated, what grant-aid is available and the accounting measures in place to ensure probity.

##### **Publicity/Public Access**

- 3.3 Members may have a view on the level of public awareness of the existence/work/achievements of the HSP. On the basis of this, the Panel may want to discuss the HSPs history of public engagement. On a related matter a question that always exists towards public

sector organisations concerns the degree to which the public is given the opportunity to attend (and makes contributions to) meetings of the various HSP bodies. Clarity could be sought on the practices that have been adopted and the reasons for them.

### **Outcomes/Monitoring/Information**

- 3.4 As was stated at the outset the purpose of preparing community strategies is to promote or improve economic, social and environmental well-being. It follows that a fundamental part of a study of the HSP will constitute an assessment of the outcomes that have been achieved. The targets and criteria employed, the regularity of monitoring and the information that is available are all common facets of a performance management culture and could provide a starting point for investigation of the HSPs outcomes.

### **Administration/Support**

- 3.5 The District Council's Administration Division provides administration services for the Board, Executive and all but one of the Thematic Groups. The Primary Care Trust administers the Health, Housing and Social Care Thematic Group. The Director of Public Health is Chairman of this Thematic group. The Policy and Strategic Services Division undertakes research and is responsible for consulting on and drawing up the Strategy. Additional research is carried out by the County Council's Research Team for both the Community Safety Partnership and for the Strategic Assessments that have informed the Sustainable Community Safety Strategy. The Panel might look at the evidential basis on which the HSP undertakes its work, the level of support provided and other officer input.

## **4. DOCUMENTS**

- 4.1 The Panel will have a clear interest in examining the Community Strategy in order to assess its effectiveness in complying with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000. The Government, in support of this Act, published guidance both on Local Strategic Partnerships and on Preparing Community Strategies. Although published in 2001 they may provide further background on the HSP.
- 4.2 More recently the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Communities and Local Government have commissioned and published national evaluations of LSPs. In addition, looking to the future, the Local Government Association has published a response to consultation by the Government on the proposed changes to their structure.
- 4.3 The documents listed in paragraph 4.2 may be more useful than those in 4.1 as are they are based on experience of how LSPs have worked and they are forward looking. Details of all of the reference materials (and others) appear in the Background Information section at the end of this report.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The Panel has expressed an interest in undertaking a study on the HSP. Background information has been briefly summarised and a number of potential area for investigation have been outlined. The

latter are, however, only suggestions and Members are free to choose any aspects of the HSP to study. In order to take the study forward, the Panel is requested to:

- a) consider whether there are any particular aspects of the HSP to study;
- b) decide whether to carry out the study as a whole Panel or to appoint a Working Group;
- c) identify the study's terms of reference and links to the Council's policies/Strategies;
- d) set out the study's objectives and projected timescales for completion;
- e) determine what further information/documents are required; and
- f) consider the potential use of those actions listed in the Study Template at Appendix B.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2001) *Local Strategic Partnerships – Government Guidance* (London: HMSO)

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (2001) *Preparing community strategies: government guidance to local authorities* (London: HMSO)

Geddes, M. (2006) *National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships – Theory of Change Issues Paper* (London: Department for Communities and Local Government)

Ipsos MORI (2006) *Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future* (London: Department for Communities and Local Government)

Local Government Association (2006) *LGA response to ODPM consultation Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future* (London: Local Government Association)

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2006) *National Evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships: Formative Evaluation and Action Research Programme 2002-2005 – Final Report* (London: ODPM Publications)

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