

**Local Government North Yorkshire and York
24 June 2011**

Review of local partnership arrangements

1. The meeting of Local Government North Yorkshire and York on 28th January 2011 considered a paper on the Review of LGNYYY Thematic Boards and Other Partnership Structures. It was agreed as part of this:

That a small group of Chief Executives be appointed, chaired by a District Chief Executive, to undertake a review of local partnership arrangements, including shared community engagement arrangements, in order to propose some common principles with a view to rationalising and making local partnership arrangements more effective, and to submit recommendations to LGNYYY on 24 June 2011.

2. This work started from the same point as the NYSP review - that this is not intended to stop partners working together, but only where it adds value and is efficient.
3. The principles for a new approach at the County/Sub regional level were agreed as:
 - The minimum number and simplest of partnership structure, consistent with delivering the required outcomes and statutory requirements
 - A North Yorkshire and York approach to county/sub regional partnership structures as far as possible, recognising that a degree of pragmatism will be required given the different local authority structures in North Yorkshire and York
 - Local partnerships, including shared community engagement arrangements, at the most appropriate local level
 - The use of task and finish groups to deal with particular issues, rather than thematic partnerships or sub groups.

These same principles are accepted as the starting point for any review of local partnership arrangements which most are on with in some shape or form.

4. One of the fundamental 'local partnership' requirements is to produce a community plan at the District level and agree actions. Without some form of partnership 'forum' to do this there would be little chance of securing engagement or means to track progress. In turn any plan would soon become meaningless.
5. This can be done without an LSP but would still need a collaborative approach within the environment of some form of local partnership/forum – (with reduced resources and process etc subject to local choice). This will also mean the District Councils taking an active lead but this is what happens already. Therefore most see the need for a strategic partnership forum of some sort as an efficient way to oversee the plan process and secure partnership agreement to a shared vision, priorities and outcomes. A 'Public Sector' Forum is seen by some as a possible alternative to an LSP which still has the fundamentals of partnership working at a local level at its core. Most also see future community plan process being substantially reduced with future plans reflecting this also.

6. The Community Plan should lead to a (small) set of strategic priorities for the plan area. Rather than standing thematic groups which seek to have oversight of all parts of the plan most see that issues that are considered strategic will be allocated to a lead authority or organisation (who will form collaborations if necessary) to deliver the priority. In this respect LSPs would be placed as lead as a 'last resort' either because something is in development before it can be 'passed on' to a lead body or it is an issue for which there is no identifiable lead. Working in task and finish mode in accordance with the principle in paragraph 3 is generally accepted. Any strategic forum that exists could also be the task and finish group by local choice etc.
7. There also needs to be recognised mechanisms for localising around such as Health and Well Being, LEPs etc. Structures at the county or sub regional level will not be able to do this. These do not have to be part of LSP structures but will need developing. For example, around GP commissioning which will be at a more local level than the Health and Well Being Board; LEP Board members will be expected in some way to relate to local geographical 'constituencies' etc.
8. Partner engagement and attendance is different between LSPs relating to geography or the emphasis of local priorities etc. We do not want rules/guidance about how LSPs should work which could build in processes and structures which are resource intensive and exist just for the sake of it. With the nature of relationships, if partners do not attend we usually know how to get hold of them and can use a range of existing mechanisms to do so. The important issue is that authorities and organisations have a contact identified that can pick up local issues or concerns and place them appropriately within their organisation and provide authoritative feedback to local partners. This would not be an alternative to established contacts where they exist but as a back stop to save having to navigate organisational structures where a contact may not be obvious or is not engaging for some reason.
9. Most Districts have some form of locality or area based working in place or developing which the LSPs work with. Where it exists the area partnership structure is valued as an appropriate mechanism for community engagement and are in accord with the NYSP principles on community engagement. There is an option to rationalise these further in some areas e.g. bringing council forums and community forums together but what matters is what works from area to area. Where they do exist they are seen as the base for future LSP/Big Society/localism type working.
10. Districts considered community engagement with the County Council in 2010. It was broadly agreed that community engagement was not a function of the County Area Committees but should be done at the area level - but not a one size fits all model. There were questions around whether some issues could be determined jointly via County Area Committees and/or at the more local level. There was a suggestion also to make the Area Committees joint Committees but little has progressed. Basically there are two points of view – but not necessarily common views from which clear conclusions emerge. From the County Councils perspective the difficulties in identifying responsibilities that Districts feel appropriate to delegate to joint area committees and from the Districts perspective whether County area committees need to exist with joint decision making when required taken at a more local area based level. There are mixed views among districts about the County Area Committees and their effectiveness from 'working well' to 'would not miss it if it did not exist'. There is some work in progress within the County Council with regard to its Area Committees with an

initial view that they should be retained and that county councillors should also be encouraged to actively engage in area community engagement structures where they exist.

11. Community Safety Partnerships are statutory and formulated at the District level, which is how the Home Office see them continuing to operate in two tier areas. Some are integrated into the LSP structures but flexibility needs to exist across the county to ensure it works best for those involved at a local level. Other developments, such as in the case of Hambleton and Richmondshire which are applying to merge, will also happen locally where there is common purpose between partners to do so. The new Police and Crime Commissioners will have powers to and be able to agree partnership mergers (not force) where all partners support this. The requirement to work in partnership for Community Safety will remain – the structure to support this will be for the responsible authorities to agree. District Councils, the Police Authority and the County Council (solely via passporting non-ringfenced Home Office grant) are now the principal local funders. Without this there will be no partnership activity. There is a review currently of the relevance and purpose of the County Wide Community Safety Forum. The need for a county wide strategy is the main requirement. Working arrangements are very much seen for the next year only as the scenery may change again with the advent of an elected Police Commissioner who will have responsibility to co-ordinate across the Police Force area.

12. It is recognised that the landscape is changing again with such as the Police and Social Responsibility Bill, Health and Social Care Bill, Localism Bill, LEPs etc. Therefore some flexibility will be required both in relation to local circumstances and national initiatives. Some may prefer to wait for the scenery to be more settled but nevertheless, in summary the main principles to emerge are:

- Some form of strategic partnership forum at District level is required consistent with delivering the required outcomes and statutory requirements.
- Local partnerships, including shared community engagement arrangements, should continue to operate at the most appropriate local level.
- A North Yorkshire approach to District based partnership functions is not desirable or achievable given local requirements and the pragmatism that will be required.
- Form should compliment function which is as streamlined and simple to operate as possible. The use of task and finish groups to deal with particular issues, rather than thematic partnerships or sub groups be supported.
- New partnership requirements such as the Health and Well Being Board and the Local Enterprise Partnership should have local engagement and influencing mechanisms whether aligned to a 'local strategic partnership' or otherwise.
- The future nature of community safety partnership working should be an early dialogue with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

13. Recommendations

- **That the suggested principles throughout this paper be used to review local partnership arrangements and community engagement mechanisms when appropriate.**

- **That each District Council report back to the next meeting on the progress/outcome or possible timescales of these reviews.**

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