

## Local Government North Yorkshire and York 24 June 2011

### Review of LGNYY Thematic Boards

#### Purpose of the report

- 1 LGNYY agreed to review whether to retain any of the four LGNYY Thematic Boards.

#### Introduction

- 2 LGNYY established four Thematic Boards in 2009 to mirror the partnership arrangements that then existed at the regional level:
  - Economy and Skills Board
  - Transport Board
  - Housing Board
  - Spatial Planning Board
- 3 The Boards comprise elected member representatives of LGNYY members, with supporting officer structures.
- 4 Given that the partnership arrangements at the regional level have ceased, LGNYY needs to establish what role it wishes to have in respect of the economy, skills, transport, housing and spatial planning and whether any of the Thematic Boards are still required.
- 5 This report has been prepared following consultation with the four Thematic Boards and the Chief Executives' Group - North Yorkshire and York.

#### Economy and Skills Board

- 6 The Government launched the concept of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) as a new approach to put private business in the driving seat to support business expansion and remove barriers to growth.
- 7 The York and North Yorkshire LEP was recognised by the Government on 10 February 2011. The LEP Board has 15 members including the chair - a private sector chair, eight private sector members and six local authority Leaders (City of York Council, North Yorkshire County Council, three from District Councils, plus East Riding of Yorkshire Council).
- 8 The Economy and Skills Board has not met since September 2010 and it has generally been assumed that the LEP Board would replace its role.
- 9 It is recommended that LGNYY formally resolve to abolish the Economy and Skills Board.

## Views from the Transport Board, Housing Board and Spatial Planning Boards

- 10 Views were requested from the chairs and lead officers of the three boards, taking into account the approach agreed by LGNYY that there should be the minimum number and simplest of partnership structures in the sub-region, consistent with delivering the required outcomes and statutory requirements.
- 11 The chair and members of the Transport Board expressed the view that it should be retained because:
- it provides the highway authorities (North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council) with an insight into District Councils' views on transport issues and District Councils with a forum to debate the key transport issues that directly affect them;
  - it has enabled engagement on key issues prior to decisions being taken by the County Council, eg Local Transport Plan, cuts to the Regional Funding Allocation uplift programme, proposed reduction in bus services, and the A64 Corridor study;
  - it is envisaged that at some point in the future the LEP will want to consider transport issues and that the Transport Board will be able to offer appropriate advice; and
  - there is an ongoing need for engagement with District Councils on transport issues linked to Local Transport Plan 3, Local Development Frameworks, and civil parking enforcement.
- 12 The chair and members of the Housing Board expressed the view that it should be retained because:
- it plays a key role in promoting the delivery of affordable housing and improving housing conditions in North Yorkshire;
  - it puts elected members in the driving seat of the increasing number of sub-regional housing decisions that need to be made;
  - it enables North Yorkshire and York to speak with a single voice on housing issues, in particular when working with the Homes and Communities Agency;
  - it enables the single North Yorkshire Housing Strategy and North Yorkshire Local Investment Plan to be taken forward in a coordinated way; and
  - it facilitates economies of scale associated with joint procurement (eg research and the Rural Housing Enabler programme), joint community engagement activities and the pooling of limited resources to provide a strategic housing resource.
- 13 The chair and members of the Spatial Planning Board expressed the view that it should be retained because:
- there is an ongoing need for elected member-led spatial planning work at the sub-regional level, against a backdrop of a rapidly and radically shifting national policy framework with key developments including the abolition of regional planning, the move to sub-regional cross-boundary strategic working, and the introduction of the Duty to Cooperate envisaged in the Localism Bill; and
  - it is essential that there is collaboration between local authorities within the sub-region on spatial planning issues that have 'larger than local' impacts.

- 14 All three Boards said that the intention would be that meetings would be held only when necessary rather than quarterly, focussing upon strategic level issues and supporting delivery.

### **Options regarding the Transport Board, Housing Board and Spatial Planning Boards**

- 15 There is no statutory requirement to have any of these Boards. LGNYY needs to establish what role it wishes to have in respect of transport, housing and spatial planning and whether any of the Thematic Boards are still required.
- 16 There are three broad options:
- abolish all three Boards and deal with strategic issues at LGNYY level, retaining the option of LGNYY commissioning specific task and finish groups as and when required;
  - retain one Board (eg Housing) and deal with the other strategic issues at LGNYY level, retaining the option of LGNYY commissioning specific task and finish groups as and when required; or
  - retain all three Boards.
- 17 Abolishing all three Boards, dealing with any strategic issues at LGNYY level would enable elected members to be actively engaged around specific strategic issues when needed, rather having ongoing structures with very broad areas of interest. It would also fit the approach agreed by LGNYY that there should be the minimum number and simplest of partnership structures in the sub-region, consistent with delivering the required outcomes and statutory requirements.
- 18 Retaining the three Boards would provide a standing structure for elected member conversations on transport, housing and planning issues, rather than having to establish task and finish groups as and when required. Officer resources and supporting structures would still be required to support the Boards, even if meetings are only held when necessary.
- 19 Currently, the Boards normally submit a short written update to every LGNYY meeting. These provide an overview of activity but do not facilitate strategic consideration of the issues and their work. Whether or not any of the Boards are retained, there may be more effective ways of enabling LGNYY to undertake a strategic consideration of the issues and their work, eg requesting the Chief Executives' Group - North Yorkshire and York to undertake a strategic review of transport, housing and spatial planning issues annually and to advise LGNYY accordingly.

### **Recommendations**

- 20 That LGNYY resolves that the Economy and Skills Board has ceased to exist and that the LEP Board has replaced its role.
- 21 That LGNYY considers whether to:
- abolish all three Boards and deal with any strategic issues at LGNYY level, retaining the option of LGNYY commissioning specific task and finish groups as and when required;

- retain one Board (eg Housing) and deal with the other strategic issues at LGNYY level, retaining the option of LGNYY commissioning specific task and finish groups as and when required; or
- retain all three Boards.

- 22 That LGNYY considers, whether or not any of the Boards are retained, a more effective way of enabling LGNYY to undertake a strategic consideration of the issues and their work, eg requesting the Chief Executives' Group - North Yorkshire and York to undertake a strategic review of transport, housing and spatial planning issues annually and to advise LGNYY accordingly.
- 23 That LGNYY requests the Honorary Secretary to draft appropriate amendments to the LGNYY constitution for approval at the meeting on 16 September 2011.

Richard Flinton  
Honorary Secretary  
Local Government North Yorkshire and York  
3 June 2011

Background papers:

- LGNYY constitution
- Email correspondence with lead officers of Thematic Boards