

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 June 2006

SCRUTINY REVIEW – THE WINCHESTER DISTRICT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

REPORT OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB 1242 – Review of District Wide Partnerships (Cabinet – 22 March 2006)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Principal Scrutiny Committee agreed in July 2005 to set up an Informal Scrutiny Group to look at the work of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) covering this District and its relationship with the City Council.

The Informal Scrutiny Group commenced its work in January 2006 and has taken evidence from a number of people involved in the LSP, including its current Chair and the former Leader, who represented the City Council on the LSP.

Overall it recognised that the Winchester LSP has taken time to establish itself as a partnership and has the potential to 'join up' the work of different organisations to meet shared targets aimed at improving the quality of life of residents. It also felt that, generally, the right people were involved, although there was a need to ensure that all parts of the District were properly represented. The Group identified a need for the Community Strategy to focus on fewer targets and ensure that it was providing sufficient resources for its own administration to run effectively.

The Group was concerned that City Councillors were not generally well informed about the LSP and its work and identified a need for these links to be strengthened.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the following issues be referred to the Winchester Local Strategic Partnership Board and the Cabinet for their consideration:

1. That, through the current review of the Community Strategy, the Winchester Local Strategic Partnership (WLSP) defines a small number of shared targets where greatest impact can be made through joint working, to give better focus to its work.
2. That the WLSP re-examines the resources available to support its work to ensure that these are sufficient to allow it to make sustained and sustainable progress in addressing its shared targets.

3. That the WLSP re-examines the frequency and timing of its meetings to ensure that these are best placed to take forward action on shared priorities and interact with other partnerships and networks that link to it.
4. That the WLSP reviews the Membership of its Board, associated partnerships and task and finish groups to ensure that the needs of the people living in all parts of the District are being properly integrated into its work, particularly where services are provided to residents from outside the District boundary.
5. That the Cabinet establishes a clear process for nominating City Council representatives to the LSP Board and its associated partnerships and networks.
6. That two way communications between the WLSP Board and City Councillors are strengthened, possibly through nominated 'champions'.

Relevance to Corporate Strategy

The Council's Corporate Strategy for 2005 – 2008 (current at the time this review was undertaken) includes the following wording:

"We will have in place a robust planning framework to link the vision set out in the Community Strategy and priorities set out in this Corporate Strategy with day-to-day targets and objectives. Over the period of this Strategy we will:

- *work with partners on the Local Strategic Partnership to ensure the Community Strategy is regularly reviewed and progress towards the improvements it identifies monitored;"*

This review was designed to examine how well these aims were being achieved and make recommendations for improvement that will help achieve the current aims in the 2006 – 2009 Corporate Strategy, which looks, amongst other things, to work as follows:

- "Partnership – ensuring we work with partner organisations to deliver real improvements to peoples' quality of life
- Clear Aims - maintaining an evidence based, outcome focused vision for the future endorsed by our community and translating this into priorities for action shared by our partners"

Resources

The report draws attention to the need for some additional resources. It will be for the LSP Board and the Cabinet to decide whether to change the level of resources currently available to support the LSP and its work.

Background Documents

Notes of meetings of the LSP Informal Scrutiny Group
Detailed notes of evidence given by former Councillor Campbell, County Councillor Roy Perry, Margaret Newbigin (Chair of the Winchester District Strategic Partnership Board) and David Pryce-Jones (GOSE Observer on the Winchester LSP Board)

Appendix

The Winchester District Strategic Partnership – Report of the Local Strategic Partnership Informal Scrutiny Group



Winchester
City Council

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

THE WINCHESTER DISTRICT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

June 2006

SCRUTINY REVIEW – THE WINCHESTER DISTRICT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPREPORT OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local authorities have a duty to scrutinise the progress of Local Strategic Partnerships. The Principal Scrutiny Committee decided to wait until the Community Strategy had been in place for a reasonable time before looking more closely at 'Winchester and District working together ...', the Local Strategic Partnership for the Winchester District.
- 1.2 The Principal Scrutiny Committee decided on 11 July 2006 to set up an informal scrutiny group to look at the Local Strategic Partnership for the Winchester District and suggested terms of reference as follows:
- To examine the terms of reference of the Winchester LSP and take a view on how well these are being met.
 - To study the composition of the LSP membership to find out how the members are selected.
 - To interview members of the LSP to find out how useful they believe the partnership is.
 - To assess how well Winchester City Council uses the recommendations of the LSP and how the LSP influences council policy.
 - To consider how members of the council can influence the working of the LSP.
 - To consider whether the work of the LSP can be better communicated to members of the council.
 - To report back on the findings of the panel and recommendations to be made to the Cabinet.
- 1.3 The Group has now concluded its work and this report sets out its findings and recommendations.

2. Background

- The Committee appointed Councillors Allgood, Beckett, Clohosey, Davies and Steel to the informal scrutiny panel. At the same time it set up an informal scrutiny panel looking at community engagement.
- 2.1 Shortly afterwards Councillor Allgood was appointed to the Board of the Winchester Local Strategic Partnership as Hampshire County Council representative. Principal Scrutiny Committee agreed to the suggestion that Councillor Allgood should participate in the community engagement work and that Councillor Chamberlain would join the LSP Informal Scrutiny Group.
- 2.2 The panel met on four occasions on 5 January, 6 February, 9 March and 12 April 2006.

3. Scope of the Review

- 3.1 At its first meeting, the Informal Scrutiny Group agreed to simplify its terms of reference, to focus on the following three areas:
- Are the right people sitting on the Winchester Local Strategic Partnership (WLSP)?
 - What specific objectives is the WLSP seeking to achieve in the short and longer term and how do they know these are the right issues?
 - How do local Councillors keep abreast of and seek to influence the work of the WLSP?

4.

Work Plan**4.1 Witnesses Interviewed**

4.1.1 The Informal Scrutiny Group met with the Chief Executive at its first meeting and discussed with him the present situation with the Winchester Local Strategic Partnership and the scope of the review. It subsequently interviewed four witnesses:

- County Councillor Roy Perry – the Hampshire County Council Cabinet Member with responsibility, amongst other things, for Local Strategic Partnerships;
- Councillor Sheila Campbell – Leader of Winchester City Council, who was the first Chair of the Winchester Local Strategic Partnership and is the City Council's representative on the partnership board;
- Margaret Newbiggin – Group Director A2 Winchester (formerly Chief Executive of Winchester Housing Group) and the current Chair of the Winchester Local Strategic Partnership;
- David Pryce-Jones – the observer from the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) on the Winchester Local Strategic Partnership Board.

4.1.2 A summary of issues raised in each of these interviews is available from the Head of Performance & Management, Chief Executive's Unit, Winchester City Council.

4.2 Written Evidence

4.2.1 The Group also took into consideration a number of pieces of written information. Key amongst these were:

- Government Consultation Paper 'Local Strategic Partnerships – Shaping their future'
- Information on the membership of other Local Strategic Partnerships in Hampshire;
- Information on Governance arrangements for Local Area Agreements;
- Information on Croydon Council, which was awarded Beacon Status in 2005/06 for its work on 'Getting closer to Communities';
- The review of the City Council's partnership working carried out by the Head of Policy (CAB 1242 considered by Cabinet on 22 March 2006 refers)

5. Findings and Conclusions**5.1 General**

5.1.1 The Group recognised that all local authorities have a statutory responsibility to produce a Community Strategy. While only areas in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding are required to establish a Local Strategic Partnership to support delivery of their Community Strategy, the Government puts emphasis on joined up working in all areas, with LSPs providing a vehicle for this.

5.1.2 The Group was satisfied that LSPs had the potential to improve dialogue between different organisations and focus their resources to address a given problem more effectively than may otherwise occur.

5.1.3 The Group recognised that the Government was continuing to develop the role of Local Strategic Partnerships. At the time of preparing this report, the outcome of the Government consultation on their future had yet to be published, but the Group anticipated that this would look to strengthen the role of LSPs, possibly developing their role as a commissioning body for local services.

5.1.4 The Group noted that the relationship between LSPs, Local Area Agreements and Local Public Service Agreements was still being developed, both at a national and local level. It was unsure how these separate but linked initiatives came together with the work of the City Council and recognised that this needed to be kept under review.

5.2 Winchester Local Strategic Partnership

5.2.1 The Group noted that the Winchester LSP had so far focussed on establishing itself as a partnership; developing its structure and working protocols. It recognised that it did take time for partnerships to develop before they start to provide tangible benefits.

5.2.2 The Group accepted that the aims of the LSP – to provide a shared agenda for the area which all organisations are working towards – had the potential to benefit local communities and could allow the City Council to influence services that were beyond its direct control. It was unable to attribute any particular success solely to the LSP but noted that those involved considered that the LSP was providing benefit by creating better dialogue between partners.

5.2.3 The Group considered that the current Community Strategy contained too many targets to allow a clear and shared focus on issues of greatest concern to the community where there was most to be gained from more joined up working.

5.2.4 The Group was impressed with the drive and enthusiasm of the LSP Chair. It also welcomed the fact that LSP meetings were now open to the public. A number of Councillors had taken advantage of this and attended meetings of the LSP Board. The need to raise the profile of the LSP and focus on making a difference in the community has been recognised by the LSP Board and was supported by the Group.

5.2.5 However, it also recognised the potential conflict for partner organisations between achieving their own organisational targets and working towards the shared agenda developed through the LSP. It acknowledged that organisations would be judged first against their own targets and that these may therefore need to take priority over shared priorities developed through the LSP. In view of this, it questioned the degree to which the LSP agenda was fully shared by all partners.

5.2.6 Evidence presented to the Group generally suggested that the right people were involved in the LSP Board. However, the Group did question whether the make up of the LSP Board and the partnerships and the task and finish groups that link to it, had sufficient representation from organisations operating in the southern (and particularly south eastern) Parishes, which in some cases are served by organisations operating out of Fareham or Portsmouth rather than Winchester. The need to strengthen working across District boundaries was raised.

5.2.7 It was not clear to the Group what steps the LSP Board was taking to avoid duplication between its work and the work of other bodies.

5.2.8 The Group was concerned whether resources currently available to support the LSP as a body were sufficient to allow it to make meaningful progress in a sustainable way. It recognised that the organisations represented on the LSP Board varied considerably from small, voluntary bodies to large public agencies and local businesses. However, it considered that more shared funding should be made available from major partners to support the work of the LSP itself. The Group considered that funding for projects should primarily be made available by drawing together existing resources available in different agencies to tackle areas identified as being shared priorities.

5.3 Relationship between Winchester City Council and the Winchester Local Strategic Partnership (WLSP)

- 5.3.1 The Group considered that, overall, City Council Members did not have a good understanding of the role of the WLSP or its work to date. It was also not aware of any set procedure by which the City Council, or individual Councillors, could refer matters to the LSP through the Council's representative on the Partnership.
- 5.3.2 Although information about the LSP and LSP meetings was now available electronically for Members to view, this was not easy to find and there was no clear mechanism for reporting back to the Council on issues raised in the LSP. For example, it was noted that the LSP had debated transport and access issues at its meeting in November 2005 but it was not clear how issues raised in this discussion had fed back to City Council's Cabinet.
- 5.3.3 To address the above points, the Group proposed that one or more Councillors should act as 'champions' and advocates for the LSP within the City Council.
- 5.3.4 The Group felt that the Leader was the right person to represent the City Council on the LSP but could not identify any formal mechanism, or Constitutional basis, on which this appointment was made.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That, through the current review of the Community Strategy, the WLSP defines a small number of shared targets where greatest impact can be made through joint working, to give better focus to its work.
- 6.2 That the WLSP re-examines the resources available to support its work to ensure that these are sufficient to allow it to make sustained and sustainable progress in addressing its shared targets.
- 6.3 That the WLSP re-examines the frequency and timing of its meetings to ensure that these are best placed to take forward action on shared priorities and interact with other partnerships and networks that link to it.
- 6.4 That the WLSP reviews the Membership of its Board, associated partnerships and task and finish groups to ensure that the needs of the people living in all parts of the District are being properly integrated into its work, particularly where services are provided to residents from outside the District boundary.
- 6.5 That the Cabinet establishes a clear process for nominating City Council representatives to the LSP Board and its associated partnerships and networks.
- 6.6 That two way communications between the WLSP Board and City Councillors are strengthened, possibly through nominated 'champions'.