

Consultation on Future of LSPs

1) Do you agree that the key role of LSPs should be to develop the vision for the local area through the sustainable community strategy and the 'delivery contract' through the LAA (as set out in figures 1 and 2)?

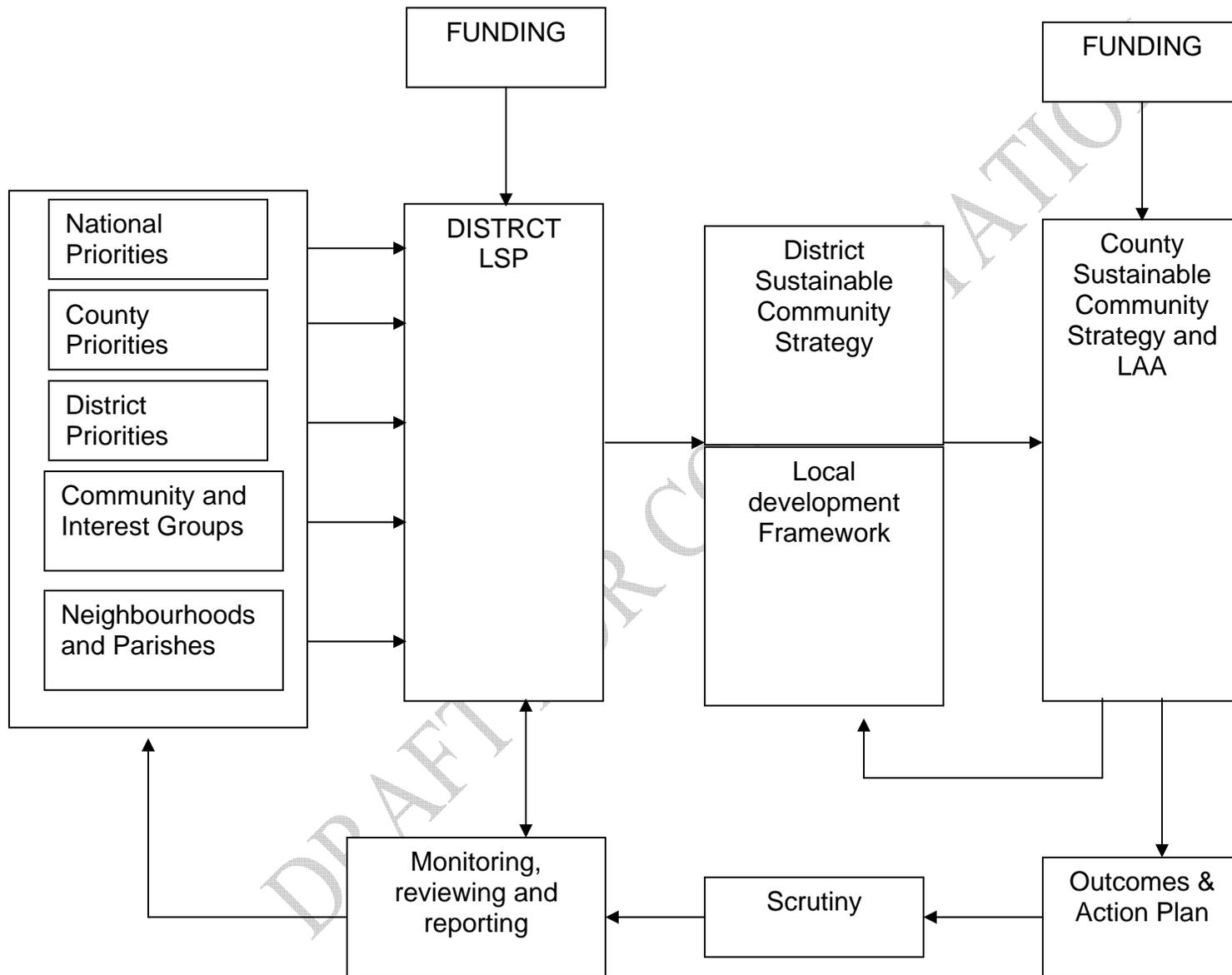
As a district LSP the Rossendale Partnership believes that its key role is to improve the lives of those who live, work and visit Rossendale and to make the Borough a prosperous, exciting place to live and invest.

We believe that the best way for us to do that is through the delivery of a vision for the area expressed through a Sustainable Community Strategy, based on sound evidence of local needs and the aspirations of local communities. The LAA should only be part of the delivery contract – i.e. that which the LSP is expected to deliver where it coincides with the needs of the local communities that the LSP serve and represent.

In addition the LSP are concerned to note that in the diagram relating to two tier authority LSPs the input into District LSPs does not allow for the District Council's issues to be included as well as County Priorities, National Priorities, Community and Interest Groups and Neighbourhoods and Parishes. District Council members are often very close to the communities they service, their role of community leaders and the accountable party for district LSPs means that the Council's priorities must also be taken into account when looking at the inputs into a district LSPs visions and role.

The diagram over leaf therefore suggests how this might look.

Of further concern was the implication within this diagram that all funding for delivery of sustainable community strategies should be channelled through the County LSP. Whilst there is merit in some of the money being directly channelled in this way there is still a need to consider the costs of managing and running a district LSP. In particular if district LSPs are to monitor performance against LAAs and do realistic and proper base lining and community engagement then these costs must be accounted for when allocation of funding is considered.



2: We believe it is important that LSPs reflect regional/sub-regional plans where relevant in their Sustainable Community Strategy priorities and that regional organisations and partnerships take account of key local needs. How can this greater co-ordination best be facilitated?

The Rossendale Partnership would agree that it is important that LSPs reflect regional/sub-regional plans and that these sub regional plans are in turn influenced by the local and neighbourhood priorities identified by LSPs. It is essential therefore that when they are drawing up plans Government ensures that key partners do take into account these local sustainable community strategies across sub regional and regional areas. These SCS will have been developed based on existing sub / regional plans and therefore there will be an iterative effect as each influences the other. However, regional and sub regional organisations need to have the ability to 'think locally whilst acting globally' and must ensure real and time realistic consultation and engagement with LSP partners – this engagement must be built into their planning cycles for policy development so that LSPs understand what issues they need to be looking at and by when.

An excellent example of how this iterative process with time realistic planning has worked in Lancashire is through the Lancashire Economic Strategy and Action Plan. Here the Lancashire Economic Partnership approached the Rossendale Partnership and its Economy theme group with prior notice of a need to engage with the development of an update to the LES. They then asked the LSP / Theme Group and District Council officer to consider their local proprieties and these were then fed into the iterative development of the LES.

3: Would a requirement on bodies producing theme or service-based plans to 'have regard' to the Sustainable Community Strategy in doing so and vice versa, increase the LSP's ability to take the over-arching view in an area?

The myriad of organisations and parties who are part of LSPs each have their own delivery plans and priorities some of which are Government directed, some of which are about business 'sense'. However, the need for these organisations to understand fundamentally the issues faced locally by communities and neighbourhoods is obvious. Without a clear understanding of the neighbourhoods that are being served, and the needs that these communities have, organisations cannot deliver meaningful services. If the SCS expresses clearly the aspirations and needs of local communities then the SCS must be taken into account by any organisation which seeks to deliver services to local people, a clear requirement to take the local SCS(s) into account when developing local plans would assist both them and the LSPs.

4: Are the proposed steps in the development of a Sustainable Community Strategy correct?

In many ways the proposed steps are correct for the development of a SCS however, whilst the need to incorporate a LAA delivery plan into a SCS Action Plan is clear – the two should not be one and the same in that, the SCS Action Plan may contain actions which are not related to the LAA but are local priorities for the area – this is particularly an issue for two tier areas but also in unitary authorities there may well be non – LAA targets which the LSP wish to achieve.

The need for the action plan to be SMART and accountable with appropriate allocation of resources is key to moving communities forward, however, the need to refresh the SCS annually and review every three years may not be appropriate. If the SCS is looking at a 10 year medium term plan, it often takes a year to embed this plan into and within partner's organisations. Inevitably planning cycles for partners will differ therefore to refresh annually may mean that a consistency is never achieved. Having 3 year rolling action / delivery plans for a 10 year vision is a more realistic way forward. Furthermore, many of the actions within LAA and CS Action Plans are not quick fix solutions and as such will require longer than a year to take effect. Initially at least consideration should be given to lengthening this time frame.

5: What more could be done to ensure Sustainable Community Strategies are better able to make the links between social, economic and environmental goals and to deal more effectively with the area's cross-boundary and longer-term impacts ?

LSPs do need to consider more their cross boundary partners, not just those to whom they regularly look but also to those where they may not have sought to work before. In particular with the reorganisation of SHAs and Local Police Forces LSPs may be forced to look at how they can work better across larger footprints.

Within Rossendale it may be more appropriate on some issues affecting local communities to look not towards our East Lancashire or wider Lancashire partners but to those LSPs and organisations within Greater Manchester.

This will remain a challenge for all LSPs but the issues of travel to work patterns, housing markets and retail catchments are issues which do need to be looked at as part of SCSs. Perhaps the SCS guidance should specifically highlight these wider cross boundary issues needing to be taking into account?

6: What should be the role of the LSP in supporting neighbourhood engagement and ensuring the neighbourhood/parish voice, including diverse and minority communities, is heard at the principal local level?

By ensuring strong community networks LSPs can have a real understanding of and engagement with local neighbourhoods.

Furthermore local councils are key to ensuring that local neighbourhoods are engaged with strategic bodies. LSPs consist of a range of partners however, the only partners who are democratically elected are Councillors, be that parish or district. As such, the voice of the local neighbourhood/ parish and of diverse communities should be represented on LSPs by the community leaders, that is the elected members and the community network.

7: In two-tier areas, is it most appropriate for the responsibility for neighbourhood engagement to rest with the district level LSP?

As suggested above it is felt that neighbourhood engagement should be a key function of local councils who will then feed into the more strategic LSP for the area.

8: How can spatial planning teams best contribute to Sustainable Community Strategies through the LSP and ensure that LDFs and Sustainable Community Strategies are closely linked?

To be completed by Forward Planning

9: How could revised guidance and accompanying support materials best ensure that Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks join up effectively?

10: Should every local authority area have its own LSP?

It is fundamental belief of the Rossendale Partnership that every local authority area should have its own LSP. Many LSPs grew out of economic partnerships that had been formed prior to any statutory requirement and as such, were places such as Rossendale not to have an LSP there is a feeling that in fact they would choose to have some sort of partnership of partnerships because of the need to ensure that all of the local partnerships within an area are co-ordinating and working together. Without this partnership of partnerships at a district level there could be real issues of duplication of effort and a lack of added value.

The question of the purpose of the County LSP was raised – if LSPs are meant to be Local is it reasonable within Lancashire for the County LSP to be the lead on any issues? Lancashire County covers extremely diverse areas both in terms of geography and deprivation. The 1.1 million people living in the County have varying needs and priorities dependant upon where they live and their individual communities circumstances. It would be impossible for one overarching LSP to cover a population of this size whilst realistically addressing local neighbourhood needs. However, district LSPs are local and are able to be both strategic and responsive to local needs. District LSPs do need to look at what the best solution is for them and their local communities and look to work across partnership boundaries where this is appropriate, this may be with one or two local district councils as currently happens with our Health and Well Being work or possibly on a wider footprint if this works, and is still neighbourhood focussed.

11: Would the establishment of a greater delineation of roles between county and district LSPs as suggested be sensible?

At present the Lancashire / District set up reflects the aggregation model and to some extent this works however, as reflected earlier in this response it is practically impossible for the needs of such a diverse area as Lancashire with such a large population to fully reflect the needs of local communities. As such an added value model may be more useful in this situation. However, to suggest that district LSPs should mainly if not solely be about local neighbourhood engagement is to largely miss the good work and real impact that district LSPs are currently already having – even those which are not NRF funded. Members of the district LSPs may well become disengaged were they to feel that their role is seen as one of only engaging and not of making real strategic difference.

The Rossendale Partnership is of the belief that it makes a difference, understands the needs of local communities and works to deliver that which will make improvements to Rossendale as a Borough and to its residents.

Therefore the Rossendale LSP welcomes any move to make clear the functions of each of the two tiers of LSP and seeks transparency in decision making and accountability at both levels, if both levels are to remain in place.

Governance of LSPs

12: We believe that it is important that the LSP is made up of the thematic partnerships in the area together with an LSP board. What is your view?

We do not believe that the structure of the LSP is as important as the outcomes that it produces and therefore whilst a general loose framework is helpful in some respects the LSP feels that it is more appropriate for there to be a clear set of

outcomes for the LSP to achieve and for each LSP to form itself in whatever way suits its local needs and resources.

Being performance managed against these outcomes is the true test of whether or not the LSP is working and is effective.

13: We believe that a rationalisation of local partnerships would help the LSP executive take an effective overview. Would clustering partnerships around the four LAA blocks be a sensible way to achieve this?

Please see previous comments

14: We believe that the geographic boundaries of partners within LSPs is important. What do you see as the opportunities for and barriers to co-terminosity shared geographic boundaries?

This has been answered previously in this consultation response and in part by the answer at point 12

15: Within the LSP framework and its established priorities, would the creation of single delivery vehicles to tackle particular issues be helpful?

In some cases single delivery vehicles might possibly be helpful but again it should be left to local partnerships to decide how best to deliver that which the local communities have identified as their priorities.

16: How can the neighbourhood and parish, tiers be involved most effectively on the LSP on a) the executive and b) individual thematic partnerships?

Engagement of parishes and neighbourhoods is very important. Through greater community involvement we are able to better achieve the needs of communities. As such an enhanced role of engagement for LSPs is likely to assist in ensuring neighbourhood involvement. The Rossendale Partnership model of mirror groups within the Community Network which then feed into the actual LSP theme groups works well for us. Again we do not feel that the same solution can be implemented in every area of the country and local LSPs should be tasked to engage but not prescribed a way in which to do so.

17: How can the private, voluntary and community sectors be involved most effectively on the LSP as a) the executive and b) individual thematic partnerships?

Within the Rossendale Partnership our format of community engagement works well. The Community Network is a loose federation of over 400 community, voluntary and faith organisations within the Borough. There are 7 groups which mirror the LSP theme groups and these discuss the issues that are raised by the community and feed into the actual LSP themes groups with 2 or 3 representatives from the community sitting on each group. The community mirror groups meet regularly and feed into a community network executive. The chair of this executive sits on the main LSP executive board. Through these mechanisms we are able to ensure that the VCF sector are involved with the decision making of the LSP.

18: Would a duty to co-operate with the local authority, in producing and implementing the Community Strategy, help to set LSPs on a firmer footing and better enable their enhanced delivery co-ordination role?

A duty to co-operate would be of help and would ensure that all partners who need to be at the table are at the table. However, it must not be seen to be a place where partners are seen to be made accountable to the Local Authority as discussed earlier, the feeling of the partnership here is that the LSP should be accountable to all of the partners equally.

19: If so, what obligations, such as attendance, financial or staff support, would be useful to place on partners?

It would be helpful if all of the partners to the LSP had an equal role in funding the work of the partnership which then had its own staff support. The duty to co-operate with the CDRP works well and a duty of this nature would be encouraged.

20: If so, which public sector agencies would the duty be most sensibly placed on?

This duty would need to differ depending on the unitary or two tier system, those at the County Table may well be different to those at the district table. It is therefore difficult to be clear which parties should have duties placed upon them, however, those agencies who have a statutory responsibility for the achievement of the national floor targets must be key to any partnership as only by ensuring that we have these partner at the table will we be able to improve the life outcomes for all.

21: Should there be a statutory duty on local authorities and named partners to promote the engagement of the voluntary and community sectors in the LSP?

In Council's increased role as community leaders they are already to be judged on their ability to engage a range of VCF sector partners. There is therefore a de facto duty already for LAs to engage. Similarly PCTs and the police all already deliver community engagement. What would be more beneficial would be a responsibility to join up this engagement which is already happening where this would be beneficial and would reduce the burden to both the communities and the agencies. In this way local people can be heard in a relevant manner and public bodies can reduce the costs of engagement by reducing duplication.

Accountability between partners

22: Should each partnership be encouraged to produce protocols or 'partnership agreements' between partners to ensure clear lines of accountability for the delivery of agreed outcomes?

This issue is difficult to be clear upon as many partners feel that to have an explicit agreement is contrary to the term 'partnership', however, a general partnership agreement which allows for a clearer level of accountability may well be useful in some circumstances. In particular a terms of reference/SLA type partnership that is common would be helpful especially for community reps who are coming in without prior knowledge.

23: We believe that if partnership working was included as part of other key agencies' assessments it would be effective in securing greater commitment from other public sector agencies. What are your views?

The harder test CPA asks local authorities what they are doing with their partners to improve local outcomes. Without a similar commitment from other agencies there may well be times when this is difficult therefore, this proposal is welcomed.

24: What do you see as the key role for executive councillors within LSPs?

Executive Councillors have a wide role within LSPs. Firstly they can share with partners the actions which the LA are taking to tackle local issues, they can share with partners the issues which local people have raised with the council as issues for them and can then add value to partners agendas by adjusting local authority priorities to fit better with those of partners.

25: What do you see as the appropriate role for backbenchers particularly in ensuring a high quality of local engagement?

Backbench members are vital to hearing the local agenda and sharing that with LSP partners not only at an executive but also at a theme group level. They are an additional voice of the community and are the only people elected to represent the wider population of an area. This community leadership role is an increasingly important one for back bench members.

26: What would make councillors' powers of overview and scrutiny more effective in scrutinising the 4 blocks of the LAA?

The ability to influence future years LAAs would make the use of O&S to scrutinise LAAA blocks more effective.

27: What would be the most appropriate way for a Member of Parliament to be involved with the LSP and how can we ensure that it is complementary to the role of local councillors?

Regular 'bulletins' from the LSP executive will ensure that the local MP(s) know what the issues and concerns are and the progress made against targets. If there are local difficulties the MP needs to know so that they can assist in smoothing the way for delivery.

28: How can we promote effective community engagement and involvement, from all sections of the community in shaping local priorities and public services?

Every local authority and LSP will need to decide for itself how to best engage with the local communities it serves. Therefore the guidance should not be at all prescriptive but should allow this freedom of action and innovation so that LSPs can tailor their involvement to local needs, resources and abilities.

29: How can we maximise the opportunities for joint policy and joint activity on community engagement, including the LDF, the LAA and the Sustainable Community Strategy?

This point is covered earlier in this response.

30: How can accountability to local people and businesses be enhanced?

To ensure accountability we need to ensure constant iterative activity - if it's good tell the world and involve them - people love to help and be involved - the more you give the more you get back. The move to "Our Hospital - our health - our say" with all the attendant services will do so much more to unite Rossendale -

business, people, places, agencies it could be the greatest thing we have ever done as an LSP.

31: What are your LSP's key support/skill gaps?

The issue of resources is the key issue for us as a non NRF funded LSP. Key staff supporting the LSP do this as a part of their other work . An enhanced role of the LSP would require an enhanced work load for these staff and this should be taken into account when two tier LSPs are considered.

The main skills gap continues to be a lack of knowledge about partners agendas and their lines of accountability and consequence. This however, is an issue which the consultation has sought to address already.

32: What extra or different support would be most helpful in shifting to a more delivery focused role?

33: How would LSPs prefer to receive information and support; through guidance, toolkits, sign-posting to existing information, practical learning opportunities etc?

Non NRF funded LSP have been less successful in some ways because of the lack of support which is afforded to those LSPs which are NRF funded – therefore access to some of the training and learning opportunities which have already been shared with NRF LSPs would be helpful – however, the costs of these should be nil or minimal so that the burden on training is not extensive to those LSPs who have few resources.

34: How can LSPs ensure that adequate learning and support provision is available to build the capacity of communities to engage with the LSP and its partners at the various levels?

A strong and vibrant Community Network which is funded and supported to deliver capacity building is vital. Some of the NRF funded CENs have been expensive and may not offer a good model of capacity building, however, there is good experience from some of the SRB, NDC and other area based initiatives, as well as from both formal and informal neighbourhood management (including that done by RSLs). These experiences could be built upon.

Furthermore the Rossendale CN currently operates with a minimal budget and delivers engaging to the community of the Borough effectively. Anecdotal evidence from other areas suggests that in some cases having a budget can lead

to great debate about where to spend the budget rather than the delivery against that budget.

35: What learning or development do you feel is required by LSPs in order to deliver sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level?

LSPs need to be given the right tools and budgets to go out and skill up local communities, and the freedom and flexibility to do whatever is right to do in that community. A can do supportive environment from all partners including national partners is essential so that LSPs can try new ways to deliver sustainability. Dealing only with the worst areas is not helpful as the less bad areas can soon deteriorate – this is a lesson of the SRB programmes across the country – LSPs must therefore be allowed to deliver where it feels it needs to deliver and not only where it is prescribed to deliver.

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION