

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR INFORMATION**

INVOLVEMENT IN THE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP)

1. Purpose

This paper provides a response to questions raised by the Committee on 16th April 2009 around the approach to engagement that the LSP has adopted. In particular, Members requested information on broader Member involvement and engagement of the local community. Building on the above, the purpose of this paper is to provide an update on

- 1) current and future engagement of Council Members in the LSP
- 2) current and future engagement of community and voluntary sector representatives in the LSP

The paper also looks at gaps, areas for improvement and what the LSP team, along with colleagues, is doing to address these.

2. Recommendation

Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

3. Background

The LSP was restructured and refocused in 2008 to ensure it was fit for purpose and best placed to meet Slough's top priorities. It was designed to bring together local service providers with local community representatives to firstly identify Slough's top priorities, then take action in partnership to tackle those priorities. There were various levels of decision making within the LSP structure (Board, seven Partnership Delivery Groups – PDGs, their sub-groups and the Forum) and effort was made to ensure people were involved at the most appropriate levels and in the most appropriate manner. A balance was struck between the need for decisive, strategic decision making and inclusive engagement of all stakeholders in Slough.

4. Arrangements for Engaging Council Members

As with many LSPs across the country, Slough's LSP Board is chaired by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Anderson. Several Cabinet Members are also involved in the LSP through their membership of one of the seven PDGs:

Cllr Christine Small – Health and Wellbeing PDG / Safer Slough Partnership
Cllr Patricia O'Connor – Children's Trust
Cllr Balvinder Bains – Safer Slough Partnership
Cllr May Dodds – Safer Slough Partnership
Cllr James Swindlehurst - Safer Slough Partnership
Cllr Satpal Parmar – Climate Change

Council Members have also attended our biannual Forum event, a large event aimed at involving a wide number of stakeholders in the work of the LSP.

Members have also attended events held by individual PDGs including the Eid Dinner hosted by Slough Against Violent Extremism (Sub-group of Community Cohesion).

Gaps and areas for improvement:

- Members of Overview and Scrutiny have been involved in one workshop introducing them to the work of LSPs and their role in scrutinising that work. This role could be built upon and further workshops could take place on a particular work area of the LSP (for instance delivery of a LAA target) and subject this to further analysis and challenge. For example, a session could focus on the delivery of the LAA indicator on fuel poverty and how this is being delivered in one of our more deprived wards (such as Britwell or Chalvey). The PDG chair responsible for that work including a cross section of relevant partners could then be invited to a scrutiny session where Members have the opportunity to question and offer challenge to the work of the PDG.
- To support communication and explaining the role and work of the LSP to Council Members, a number of briefing sessions have taken place. Discussions are under way with Democratic Services and Organisational Development regarding the new Members' training calendar to include a session on Strategic Partnerships.

5. Arrangements for Engaging Voluntary and Community Representatives

The LSP structure ensures the engagement of voluntary and community representatives occurs at the appropriate levels:

LSP Board: Chief Officer of Slough Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS), Ramesh Kukar represents the wider voluntary sector on the Board.

LSP PDGs:

- Health and Wellbeing – SCVS representative
- Children's Trust - SCVS representative
- Safer Slough Partnership - SCVS representative

- Community Cohesion – Slough Equalities Commission and SCVS representatives
- Climate Change – Groundwork Thames Valley representative

The Board and PDGs were instructed to limit their memberships in the 2008 restructure to support focused decision making. The VCS is still involved in individual PDGs where appropriate with the majority of community and voluntary groups represented on PDG sub-groups or at the biannual Forum.

To develop more regular engagement with the third sector (outside the biannual LSP Forum) all PDGs have been asked to think about how they engage the community and voluntary sector. This has resulted in the Safer Slough Partnership running a Forum event and the Climate change PDG setting up an environmental community group.

A lot of work is going in to communicating with local people to ensure all appropriate stakeholders are aware of the work being done through the LSP and how they can feed their views in. For example we are working on an online consultation portal with the Council's communications team to gather the views of LSP members and the wider public. We are also developing an LSP website that will act as a public information point. The website will be live by the end of October, 2009.

Community Champions

Recently, the SCVS has established a programme of electing and training Community Champions. The Champions represent views of the Community Network (body bringing together large number of community and voluntary groups in Slough). The Community Champions have been elected on the basis of a theme, with ten themes currently being championed. This includes children and young people, older people, community cohesion, transport, mental health services and carers' issues. Through representing the community and voluntary sector, it is envisaged that Champions will have an impact on the work of the LSP by

- Identifying gaps and developing solutions
- Engaging and meeting needs of under-represented groups
- Focussing on holistic and preventative services
- Ensuring participation of service users
- Enhancing collaborative working
- Securing new delivery opportunities and tailoring activities to local priorities

The LSP has been keen to tap into the Community Champions initiative and their engagement with the work of PDGs is being encouraged. Community Champions have been engaged in the capacity of advisors, consultees and to provide challenge to the work of individual PDGs. Groups that are currently working with champions include Community Cohesion, Children's Trust, Health and Wellbeing and Community Safety.

The LSP has been successful at engaging partners at a strategic level. Progress has been made in engaging the local community through the

established third sector. The engagement of the local community through the third sector is one of the most effective mechanisms available for public agencies to involve local people in the work of the authority. Whilst it has to be recognised that an engagement strategy which uses the third sector as a conduit cannot by definition reach everyone (given that individual third sector organisations do not themselves represent *all* interests), the third sector continues to represent an important cross section of local opinion that continues to be of value in assisting local agencies to plan and improve service delivery.

The next Forum event will be themed around working with the community and voluntary sector and promoting the principles and protocols of Slough's Compact.

Conclusion

Since the restructure of the LSP the partnership has made progress in developing its engagement and involvement strategy. At a strategic level, the LSP has successfully hosted two Slough Focus Forum events providing a broad cross-section of local stakeholders, third sector organisations and partners with an opportunity to become involved in the work of the partnership. At the same time and to develop a mechanism for continuous engagement, the LSP has invested in the development of a user-friendly website. Acting as a repository of information to do with the partnership, the website will enable constituent partners as well as all interested parties to obtain up-to-date information on the work of the partnership including agendas and minutes of partnership delivery groups, reports from any events held, contact details of the LSP team, membership of PDGs and the Board, the partnership constitution and terms of reference and other useful information.

Individual PDGs have started to develop mechanisms to secure the engagement of stakeholders on a more regular basis. This includes the establishment of subgroups such as the Safer Slough Stakeholder Forum and Climate Change establishing an environmental community group. Health and Wellbeing and the Children's Trust have also sought to co-opt Slough Council for Voluntary Services into the PDG to provide the third sector perspective.

Finally in a bid to strengthen existing engagement initiatives, the LSP has worked closely with Slough Council for Voluntary Services to utilise the Community Champions resource. Not only does this provide the Partnership with another means of engaging local stakeholders – it allows the partnership to establish relationships with individuals who are required to champion the interests of local people *not* any individual group.