

ADUR & WORTHING LSP MERGER FEASIBILITY STUDY

Report and Proposals from Consultants

Marilyn Taylor & Clive Jacotine

November 2008

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the conclusions arising from the two LSP consultation workshops held on 24th September 2008.¹
- 1.2 A collaborative approach to partnership working across the two districts is recommended through a new joint LSP Executive structure, with clear responsibilities for both overall strategy and for delivery (particularly for priority areas of deprivation), and through four Joint Theme Groups (local feedback means that a joint Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership is not included at present).
- 1.3 The new arrangements should be built on the principle of 'separate but together' and be underpinned by a clear strategy for community consultation and accountability (particularly in priority neighbourhoods) including the formation of two new district Community Sounding Boards for Adur and for Worthing, building on existing LSP arrangements (and potentially linking with the County Local Committees). Proposals for joint scrutiny arrangements in relation to the delivery of LAA priorities are also discussed.
- 1.4 These emerging proposals are to be discussed at a joint meeting of the two LSPs on Wednesday 10th December, alongside the development of a timescale for implementation.

¹ a summary of the main feedback points from these workshops is available at Appendix A (as prepared by Gill Frost and previously circulated)

2 General Conclusions from the Workshop Consultations

- 2.1 Adur enjoys and values the way its LSP works, with most partners viewing it as a friendly and informative body, with strong engagement from its stakeholders, particularly at a more local level. However, it is recognised that the partnership could be improved and strengthened, particularly its focus on major issues of deprivation. There is a strong desire for a more effective voice and influence at the County level, and for the development of a more strategic response to Adur's (and Worthing's) worsening deprivation profiles.
- 2.2 Although Worthing partners value the opportunities for partnership and information exchange provided through existing LSP arrangements, they are generally dissatisfied with the effectiveness of their LSP in recent times and would like to make a completely new start. Partners believe that the Theme Groups work reasonably well and make a difference, but would like to streamline arrangements and to merge the two districts' Theme Groups for greater impact.
- 2.3 Stakeholder engagement and involvement is valued by both LSPs, including with local communities. However, there is concern that larger structures may make involvement by community and voluntary organisations more difficult or remote and that valuable local knowledge could be lost. Councillors play important roles, but there is a need for better coordination of effort at the grassroots. Stronger and more collaborative scrutiny arrangements would help local councillors play a more effective role in relation to LSP activity.
- 2.4 Both districts are concerned about specific local areas of deprivation, and there are many similarities between their needs and the actions required of partners. There are 11 areas of high need across the two districts where specific neighbourhood plans are being proposed, building on work which has been initiated as part of delivery responsibilities for outcomes 21 and 22 of the existing LAA. This work can provide a positive base for the further development of partnership work on key outcomes at the neighbourhood level.
- 2.5 Both districts were concerned that the focus should be on delivering the LAA outcomes, and improving local areas. More robust evidence gathering and data sharing across the two districts would help support the development of a strong voice and influence at the county level.

- 2.6 The potential to work in closer partnership with planning strategies was readily recognised, with a need for stronger LSP involvement in cross-boundary issues arising from housing growth proposals, particularly at Shoreham Harbour. The proposed future merger of planning policies (through Local Development Frameworks) for Adur and Worthing is a strong driver for change in the way Sustainable Community Strategies are best prepared, particularly in relation to strategies for community consultation and involvement.
- 2.7 The County Local Committees are considered to be a good way of reaching out to involve partners in their work but could be more inclusive and provide greater co-ordination with existing initiatives in both districts.

3 Proposals for Change: LSP Merger

- 3.1 The primary aims of the proposals for change are to:
- enable partners to co-ordinate more effective delivery and reduce duplication of effort through streamlining partnership arrangements
 - provide an effective voice at county level
 - develop democratic and community accountability
 - strengthen the focus of activity in areas of acute deprivation
- 3.2 The key components are proposed as follows:
- the establishment of a new joint Executive Team
 - a regrouping and merger of Theme Groups
 - the formation of two District Community Sounding Boards
 - the further development of neighbourhood-based delivery
 - the establishment of joint scrutiny arrangements
- 3.3 Each of these components is explained in more detail below.

3.4 LSP Executive Team

This would be a cross-district strategic body (meeting every 6-8 weeks) responsible for:

- setting up the new LSP arrangements
- the overall LSP strategy for both Adur and Worthing (including overseeing production of a joint SCS and neighbourhood plans)
- developing a coordinated business planning cycle and overseeing delivery co-ordination (including responsibility for resources where appropriate)
- performance management (and the monitoring of spend where appropriate)
- ensuring that there is a robust approach to assembling and reviewing data and evidence
- overseeing the production and implementation of consultation arrangements (in accordance with the new Duty to Involve)
- liaising with member scrutiny and other requirements
- overseeing communications across the LSP and member structures, and with the County PSB

As it will be an executive body it will need to have tighter membership than the previous LSP Boards with a maximum of about 15 members, which could include:

- the joint authority chief executive²
- the council leader or a senior councillor from Adur
- the council leader or a senior councillor from Worthing
- a county councillor from Adur
- a county councillor from Worthing
- Adur CVS
- Worthing CVS
- Sussex Police
- West Sussex PCT
- Job Centre Plus
- Learning and Skills Council
- The Environment Agency
- West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
- Business representative
- School/college representative

² The Chief Executive and the two Council Leaders are on the County Public Services Board and therefore their involvement in the LSP Executive would strengthen strategic linkages between the Adur/Worthing LSP Executive and the County level work, particularly in relation to LAA delivery

Those attending will be expected to be people of sufficient seniority to be able to act and take decisions, or to speak with authority on behalf of the sector they represent (eg the CVS representatives). Through their democratic mandate, the councillors will also be key contributors about the views of local communities and service users.

Arrangements for chairing the body need to be considered as part of action planning, but could rotate (for example between the two council leaders for example).

3.5 Joint District Theme Groups

The following four joint district Theme Groups are proposed (noting that we would have also wished to recommend a joint Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership but have been advised such an approach is not favoured at this time):

- Health & Wellbeing Partnership
- Children & Young People Partnership
- Economic Development, Skills and Employment Partnership
- Planning, Housing, Transport and Environment Partnership

The proposed joint Health and Wellbeing Partnership needs to be based on a collaborative approach with the county council's arrangements (bearing in mind that the County Council and the PCT have a statutory duty to prepare the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in consultation with district councils³). The Children & Young Peoples Partnership similarly needs proactive synergy with the work of the County Council's Children's Trust, whilst the final two suggested groups can be developed to suit local requirements (eg developing more proactive work on unemployment, worklessness and employer-led skills provision, and joint work on coastal strategies, Shoreham Harbour development, Section 106 etc).

It should be entirely within the Theme Groups' prerogative to establish any sub-groups, or task/finish groups they see fit at any time in order to address specific issues or to allow for more consultative or collaborative working involving wider participation.

In all cases large memberships for the Theme Groups (ie more than 15 persons) are not recommended. Specific proposals for membership of the suggested Theme Groups should be developed by Adur and Worthing Officers in conjunction with the new joint LSP Executive

³ The Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (section 116)

Team, building on existing arrangements and ensuring a relevant mix of expertise from all sectors, not just the public sector, and for appropriate service user representatives (see 3.6 below). Specific partner organisations should be encouraged to take full responsibility for particular Theme Groups as appropriate. The new joint Theme Groups should be task focused, not purely consultative, and involve relevant people/organisations responsible for service delivery. This point is particularly relevant to any future proposals for joint service commissioning.

3.6 District Community Sounding Boards (CSB)

The suggestion is to establish two separate District Community Sounding Boards (an Adur CSB and a Worthing CSB) for both Adur and Worthing, which would both be convened twice a year and which would aim to attract widespread community, business and voluntary sector attendance (and including Parish Councillors). Their remit could include:

- oversight of local consultation and engagement strategies
- responding to specific council and other consultations
- reviewing delivery performance of Theme Groups
- considering specific issues of concern (possibly choosing one key theme each meeting or as appropriate)
- reviewing performance against LAA targets relating to stronger communities

Membership of the existing Adur and Worthing LSPs could be readily adapted into the new CSBs, and there may also be potential value in considering an integrated approach with the County Council, ie linking each CSB in with its County Local Committee. There should also be active collaboration with health and social care LINKs established within the wider area of Adur and Worthing.

Depending on the approach taken to the selection of the Theme Groups' memberships, it may be helpful for each CSB to ensure they have a representative on each of the Theme Groups to contribute local knowledge and service-user views and to assist the communications channels between the Theme Groups and CSBs. We also suggest that the CSBs should have strong links with the scrutiny process for LAA delivery (see 3.8 below).

We do not recommend that a specifically formal approach be taken to CSB meetings. Formats can vary, depending on the issues to be

considered, and should be predominantly workshop-style, and possibly under-pinned by more celebratory or fun events, such as festivals and other community-based events.

Finally we would comment, as explored in our previous briefing paper, that the new Audit Commission proposals for the introduction of 'Comprehensive Area Assessment' will be focusing on the effectiveness of arrangements made for councils and local service providers to engage with local people, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. LSPs are expected to take responsibility for co-ordinating consultation activity (as set out in the new Statutory Guidance for LSPs) and there will be the new statutory 'duty to involve' coming into force for local councils in April 2009, and later extending to other services as well.

3.7 Neighbourhood Based Delivery

With reference to the proposed neighbourhood plans for the 11 priority local areas, some sort of local neighbourhood structure or forum involving local services and local people, and with the direct involvement of local ward councillors, is recommended for future consideration. This could be based on extended Safer Neighbourhood Panels being established by the Police Service to avoid duplication, but would principally look at community safety, local environmental and public realm issues, and other local activities relevant to delivery of the neighbourhood plans.⁴ Essentially the approach would be similar to those adopted for neighbourhood management initiatives, which have been found highly effective for engaging and empowering communities, improving peoples' satisfaction with where they live and getting service providers working together more effectively and efficiently.⁵ Streamlining LSP and thematic arrangements could provide the opportunity to better support neighbourhood plans.

Where there are major locality-specific initiatives (e.g. Shoreham Harbour) then these could provide the platform for the necessary higher level of local input in masterplanning or for meeting the community consultation requirements for LDF Area Action Plans.

⁴ Sir Ronnie Flanagan said in his review of policing earlier this year that for the police at all levels to be successful, neighbourhood policing needed to be embedded within a broader neighbourhood management approach (see <http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/police-reform/flanagan-police-review/>)

⁵ Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders: Final Evaluation Report, People, Places, Public Services: Making the Connections, CLG October 2008

3.8 Joint Scrutiny

The consultation on the Government's new proposals for improving local accountability through enhanced scrutiny arrangements for LAAs has just closed.⁶ These proposals recognise the opportunities presented by overview and scrutiny functions for strengthening community empowerment, enabling local people through their councillors to participate in decisions which affect their day to day lives. The consultation makes proposals for the establishment of joint county and district overview and scrutiny committees, working together collaboratively to make reports and recommendations about the attainment of local improvement targets specified in the LAA for the area, and co-ordinating their efforts with relevant partners on the scrutiny of LAA targets. It also proposes that:

- district council overview and scrutiny committees may make reports and recommendations on matters relating to a local improvement target to the relevant county council or the county council executive
- the county council, or county executive will be required to respond within two months to a district scrutiny committee report or recommendation
- associated authorities will be required to have regard to reports and recommendations made by district overview and scrutiny committees.

Close cooperation to minimise duplication of effort is recommended between county/district scrutiny arrangements (see section 5 below).

We recommend that scrutiny arrangements for the LAA in Adur and Worthing should fall under the remit of the existing Joint Scrutiny Committee across the functions of both Adur and Worthing Councils.⁷ These arrangements, when they come into force in their final form, may be further strengthened by involving the proposed CSBs in Adur and Worthing in scrutiny activity as felt appropriate, as part of councillors' evidence gathering, and the seeking of wider views within the community.

⁶ Communities in control: Real people, real power; improving local accountability consultation; CLG August 2008

⁷ Although it is important to be clear that scrutiny responsibilities for LAA lie directly with the County Council and therefore our proposals are optional, not statutorily required. However, the County Council can confer specific aspects of scrutiny to district councils thus enabling a shared approach.

4 Priorities for the LSP Work Programme

- 4.1 Production of a clear 'story of place' and long-term vision for its future will be key to the progress of joint LSP working and therefore an early priority should be given to producing a new Sustainable Community Strategy. However, the opportunity should be taken to work more proactively with the development of local planning policies, particularly the gathering and analysis of relevant data, and looking at data and evidence more spatially within the wider sub-region etc. Time should be taken to develop more deliberative local consultation, based on the evidence collected, and involving local ward councillors.
- 4.2 The second priority should be to focus on delivery responsibilities for the new County LAA, perhaps with the 5 proposed Theme Groups working on some specific local targets for Adur and Worthing, and particularly within the priority neighbourhoods.
- 4.3 Partly the work programmes will depend on the timescale for implementation of the LSP merger proposals, if they are accepted, and further consultation on this will take place at the December workshop. The new joint LSP Executive Team will need to both drive and oversee the changes.

5 Learning from Elsewhere

Finally, since the consultation workshops took place the Local Government Association has published an informative report exploring arrangements for LAA delivery in two-tier local government areas. The report recognises the significant opportunities for district council/county collaboration arising from the new LAA arrangements, and includes a number of case study examples from existing counties about how LSPs are developing collaborative arrangements across different boundaries and responsibilities, and including scrutiny arrangements. It is recommended as a useful reference guide.⁸

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⁸ Changing Places, Local Area Agreements and two-tier local government, LGA, September 2008; <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/publications/publication-display.do?id=1032701>



LSP Merger Feasibility Study CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS

Combined Report from both the Adur LSP
and the Worthing LSP Workshops held on
24th September 2008

1. Introduction

Natalie Brahma-Pearl, Adur & Worthing Councils

NBP thanked all attendees for taking the time out of their schedules to attend today's workshop.

The local authority has a duty to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and this needs the LSP to input into, own and deliver its priorities. There has been support in Adur and Worthing for the production of a joint SCS, so it's possible that a joint LSP will be best placed to deliver this. Some statutory partners have also raised the possibility of bringing some areas of work together, as they cover both localities and cross-cutting issues.

However, Adur in Partnership and Worthing Together are your LSPs, not the District or Borough Councils, and so partners need to take ownership of this process. This will be the biggest strategic decision the LSPs have had to make. Independent consultants have been appointed to explore the issues and help partners understand the wider policy context that now affects the work of LSPs.

Both localities have shared issues and concerns, for example worsening deprivation statistics, and there are opportunities for joint working to increase the LSPs ability to draw in extra funding.

Today is an opportunity for all partners to explore all the options surrounding a possible merger and give their honest views and feedback.⁹

⁹ NB: There were separate workshops for Adur in Partnership and Worthing Together, these notes have been written as a summary of the day and do not indicate a joint workshop was held.

2. Policy Context and Joint Working Options

Marilyn Taylor

Central government is now delivering clearer guidance on the performance framework for LSPs and local authorities. There are now 198 national indicators against which all local services and local government will be assessed. The Local Area Agreement (LAA) has 33 improvement targets which local service providers will be measured on specifically. The new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which will be implemented in April 2009, will measure the positive outcomes for local people which all agencies in that area have delivered. It is a place-specific approach with locally agreed important targets.

The new statutory guidance for LSPs underpins the need for partnership working, and agencies will have a statutory duty to cooperate with each other and deliver agreed priorities. There is a duty to actively consult the communities LSPs will work in, and elected members will have new roles of greater involvement with the public as well as greater scrutiny powers.

The new role of LSPs in two tier arrangements (i.e. where District/Borough Councils fall under a County Council) can be complex. The new SCS will be 'place-based' at a very local level and needs to be integrated with the Local Development Framework (LDF). The CAA will be looking to LSPs to give a lead on community consultation and also at how they engage with Planning Policy in production of the LDF. The primary role of LSPs is to deliver the priority outcomes in the LAA.

The idea of a merger gives partners the opportunity to join up services and resources. It provides a framework for robust delivery of LAA outcomes and community engagement. It can also allow partners to focus on place specifics in delivering the SCS priorities.

There are essentially three options for merger:

1. Total merge into one cross-boundary LSP
2. No changes to current arrangements
3. Incremental changes:
 - Produce a joint SCS and share scrutiny arrangements
 - Joint SCS and one Executive Board and scrutiny
 - Joint SCS, separate Boards but some merged subgroups

In thinking about the SCS partners need to consider that both areas may have common priorities and issues, common demographic challenges and common drivers of change through economic development, regeneration and housing growth.¹⁰

¹⁰ See attached draft 'Community Profile for Adur and Worthing 2008' which outlines the similarities and shared priorities for each area based on recent statistical data.

The LSP structures outlined below:

- Same:
 - Large Boards
 - Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships
 - Health & Wellbeing
 - Children & Young People
 - Environment (with Transport in Worthing)

- Different:
 - AiP have Housing and Education & Training subgroups
 - WT have Communications and various other subgroups

For Adur, the Shoreham Harbour regeneration and the Shoreham Renaissance is a specific infrastructure planning issue. In Worthing there is the Worthing Masterplan.

When considering the options for improvement, partners are asked to consider the following points and how they will meet such challenges:

- Adjusting to changed LSP roles and responsibilities
- Strengthening citizen engagement
- Improved delivery
- Strong intelligence/monitoring that informs the work of LSPs
- Delivering improved outcomes
- Opportunities to increase the impact and strategic influence of a partnership

3. Group Work

All Partners

What is distinctive about your LSP and what do you do well?

Answers from AiP:

- Strong involvement of local people
- Strong tradition of partnership working
- Compact area to work in means outcomes are more achievable
- Good communication and community engagement
- Good LSP structure and friendly and constructive discussion
- Distinctive geographical issues which set us apart, eg. No big hospitals, harbour regeneration
- Good local knowledge, small district and good networking
- Friendly, trusting, open debate
- Practical approach – the partnership does deliver and debates about health, deprivation, education and other issues have produced results
- AiP does draw in at a community level very involved people. The networks created open up opportunities and deliver effective partnership work

- LAA targets, e.g. Outcome 22 money has funded actual work in the community which has had an impact
- The strength of the partnership means that vital issues such as Adur's educational attainment were brought to the table, the secondary schools were engaged with the LSP and we were able to escalate this issue to WSCC and drive real improvement. These issues need a long term focus however, it has taken 5-8 years to see results in education but the LSP is able to carry issues beyond the election cycle (4 years) and provide a consistent drive for improvement

Answers from WT:

- Relationships and communication through the subgroups
- Inclusive partnership
- Sharing ideas/knowledge
- Not duplicating resources
- Good theme groups

What do we need to do better?

Answers from AiP:

- We need the best structures and arrangements to delivery priorities
- In a two-tier arrangement we need our own 'story of place' whether the SCS is joint or not
- The County SCS does not reflect local issues. The IMD¹¹ show that deprivation is worsening in the area, we need to address this through our SCS and improve life chances for local people
- Evidence of what interventions/actions are needed and what is already being done
- Stronger voice upwards and more influence
- Links to Brighton & Hove (Harbour, capturing skills sets from the Universities, vocational skills)
- Need stronger links and influence with County Council
- More community engagement
- Need to improve local jobs and economy, joining up services and communicate a way that is accessible to the public
- Information about how the LSP operates should be clearer, including who is represented on it. LSP needs to be flexible to meet changing demands
- Engagement with business sector could be improved as they are the suppliers of jobs and training for local people

¹¹ Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007

Answers from WT:

- The LSP lacks outcomes and purpose
- No real leadership from Steering Group
- The subgroups add more value 'in spite of' the LSP
- LSP should have significance and influence, the Board are not able to deal effectively with strategic issues
- Need actioned targets that are owned and delivered by partners
- Upwards influence to County Council for resources
- Better communication and community consultation, consultation mechanisms need to be streamlined and improved to use resources better
- Demonstrate we can make a difference
- Leadership and Chair is a big role - need the right person to drive and lead the LSP
- Better grassroots involvement and raise the profile of the LSP
- Councillors need to know what the public want so they can bring this to partners
- Be performance led with measurable actions and outcomes
- Focus on delivery and public reassurance
- WT needs scrutiny involving all partners
- Clarity about how decisions are being made and on what
- Maximum value for partners. Meetings need to be structured so that they can make a worthwhile contribution
- Partners do not feel informed or empowered – they need better information, guidance and the ability to deliver

Better outcomes from closer working or merger?

Answers from AiP:

- Stronger voice, more influence
- Potentially more funds and bigger share of money from WSCC
- Need to agree outcomes, available resources and action plans
- Utilise Officers to project manage activities
- Allow community groups access and a voice on the LSP
- Local action plans for priority areas – join up common themes and relevant partners
- Training programme for all partners, capacity building
- Good to streamline the partnership in order to make best use of resources, make sure LSP is receptive to change
- Priority areas will be in SCS, need to address their issues in a meaningful way, focus should be on outcomes and deliver under the best structure possible

Answers from WT:

- We need an Executive Board which is focused on delivery, strategy and performance management
- Clear steer needed on the direction of travel and the aims of LSP
- Strong leadership
- Better engagement with partners and community
- Exec Board would give steer and start the change process, the subgroup changes would be incremental
- Would have clear action plans and local delivery
- Partners would feel their contributions can make a difference