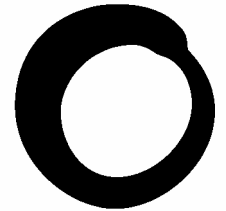


April 2005



**Friends of
the Earth**

Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships

Introduction - 'the modernisation of local government'

Since the New Labour Government was elected in 1997 a common theme has emerged concerning the delivery of public services, leading to the need to develop 'joined up thinking and joined up working - from the bottom up!' It was felt that many of those responsible for the delivery of public services needed to rid themselves of their departmental 'silo' mentalities and ways of working. They also needed to find ways of consulting and involving local people in the prioritisation, planning and delivery of services if the problems of social and economic disadvantage experienced by many communities were to be successfully tackled.

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Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships

A range of initiatives have come from Government to develop this way of working in local authorities and other agencies such as the health service and the police. These have included 'New Deal for Communities', 'Neighbourhood Renewal Areas', and 'Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders' as well as projects that target specific sections of the community such as Sure Start (families with young children) and Education Action Zones.

All these initiatives have similar aims and characteristics. They:

- provide extra resources;
- are focused on narrowing the gap between the most deprived areas and the rest of the country and place great emphasis on partnership working that includes the community as the important stakeholder;
- have the function of 'bending' main stream services (and their budgets) to work in more co-ordinated partnerships that reflect local needs and priorities.

These measures together with new constitutions for local authorities that include cabinet arrangements, scrutiny committees and in many cases 'community forums' have moved the modernisation of local government agenda of New Labour a long way forward.

Local Strategic Partnerships

It was a condition for the Neighbourhood Renewal areas that were established in the 88 most deprived local authorities, that to receive additional funding, they had to establish a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP was to be a forum consisting of representation from the:

- public sector organisations (e.g. local authority, Police and Fire Services Job Centre Plus, Primary Care Trust);
- private companies (particularly if they are major employers);
- business organisations;
- community and voluntary sector.

The actual membership is determined by each LSP to suit what are considered to be the needs of the local authority area. Although it is not a statutory requirement, most of the local authorities not included within the 'Neighbourhood Renewal' programme have also established LSPs as a way of developing partnership working. Usually the LSP is based on a single local authority area, but in some parts of the country LSPs have been formed that include more than one local authority area, and in addition, many County Councils have developed their own additional partnership arrangements.

The role of the LSP is as follows:

- ◆ Prepare a Community Strategy for the area and ensure that it is implemented according to agreed targets and timetable;

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- ◆ Bring the partners of the LSP together to encourage joint working that more effectively and efficiently meets local needs and priorities;
- ◆ Liaison with local authorities in the development of their public service agreements, and with the 'pathfinder' authorities that are developing the new Local Area Agreements that streamline funding and define priorities in such areas as 'children and young people', 'older people and health' and 'safer, stronger communities'.

The LSP should have a structure that attempts to provide some linkage from community level to that of the decision-making forum. This may be through representation from a local community forum, the voluntary sector (Council for Voluntary Service) and/ or extensive community consultation arrangements. They will probably also have a co-ordinating group, usually consisting mainly of public service officers, but also including representatives from the other sectors represented on the Forum.

Community Strategy

Every local Authority is obliged by the Local Government Act 2000 to develop and deliver a Community Strategy. Most Local Authorities have undertaken this responsibility through a Local Strategic Partnership that brings together a range of relevant partners to help prioritise, plan and deliver its aims and objectives. LSP's have also to be seen in the context of the many other partnerships that have developed to more effectively deliver public services. These include 'Learning and Skills Councils', 'Community Safety Partnerships' and Children's Strategic Partnership. In many LSP's the work, of these other partnerships have been incorporated into the 'Community Strategy', and have been incorporated into the LSP as theme groups. The aims and objects of the Community Strategy are also those used by the Local Development Framework (Local Plan).

The Community Strategy is usually developed around several themes. Typically, these could be:

- Economic Regeneration
- Community Safety
- Homes and Neighbourhood
- Leisure and Culture
- Lifelong Learning
- Healthy Communities
- Environment
- Transport.

The Community Strategy should provide a framework for the application of the funding from the government initiatives. Where there is no such funding, many Councils struggle to implement the Community Strategy.

Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships

It must be stressed that there is no single model for a Local Strategic Partnership. They all have evolved in their own individual ways to suit local circumstances, and they have no statutory powers. The disadvantage in this is that they can be hard to get a handle on – to understand how to get involved and have your say. The advantage is that there is more room to manoeuvre - to argue for more democratic and accountable structures, for wider and more inclusive representation, and to get concerns and issues on to the agenda and into the Community Strategy.

How to get involved?

A good starting point is when the LSP consults on its draft Community Strategy. They will usually be through written responses and/or at a public meeting. These are often poorly attended so it is a good chance to have your say and get yourself known. It also a good opportunity to meet staff and members of the LSP to find out how yours works!

Community Strategies are often based on more local community consultation. This could be in the form of public meetings or more innovative events such as 'Planning for Real'. The intention will be find out what the concerns and priorities for local people are so that a local action plan and /or the Community Strategy can reflect them. Again, this is a useful place to get involved.

LSP's and Community Strategies are not just concerned about communities of place. They are also concerned about communities of interest. One way to get your interests registered with them is through the local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) who often have a place in their own right at all levels of the LSP. It is often the CVS who organise representation of the voluntary sector within the LSP, so this is another useful point of contact. In some LSP's it may well be possible to be nominated from the CVS direct to a theme group of the LSP. In other LSP's it may be possible to be represented directly. The LSP's in the 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas have to organise community representation through a 'community empowerment network' of the LSP, another point at which to get involved.

Finally, it is well worth remembering that the paid officers of the LSP are often lonely! While in theory their role is central to the function of local government and the delivery of services, in practice they are often marginalised, because their role has been inadequately defined by Government and they have no statutory place. Therefore, it is well worth arranging to meet your LSP officers to simply discuss with them how you, as a member of the public, can get involved.

Further information:

Friends of the Earth

Planning home page at Friends of the Earth

<http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/local/planning/index.html>

Briefing paper: A Local Campaigners Guide to the New English Planning System

http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/guides/new_english_planning_system.pdf

National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

Social Exclusion Unit

35 Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3BQ

tel. 020 7944 8383

www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu

Local Government Association

Local Government House,

Smith Square,

London SW1P 3HZ

Tel: 020 7664 3000

www.lga.gov.uk/

'Planning for Real'

Registered by the Neighbourhood Initiative Foundation

The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation

The Poplars,

Lightmoor,

Telford TF4 3QN

Phone: 0870 7700339 Fax: 01952 591771

<http://www.nifonline.org.uk/>

Croydon Council

With some particularly good ideas about promoting sustainability through the LSP

www.croydon.gov.uk/csp

CHART

(The LSP for Chesterfield Borough Council and North East Derbyshire District Council)

An example of a multi borough LSP with detailed action plans for theme groups available

www.chartlsp.co.uk/

Local Government Act 2000

http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=1878&l=3

Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships flow chart

