



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

No Direct Ward Relevance

17th March 2010

Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group – Interim Report

(Report of the Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group)

1. Summary of Proposals

This report details a number of interim recommendations that have been concluded by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Task and Finish Group. The Group's recommendations are designed to increase local Councillors' familiarity and involvement with the Redditch Partnership, the LSP in Redditch. The Group are also aiming during their review to produce recommendations that will: extend the level of public engagement in the work of the partnership; enhance the accountability of the partnership; and help improve performance management arrangements for the Redditch Partnership.

In addition to the recommendations contained within this report a number of options for improving the performance management of the Redditch Partnership have been discussed. These options have not yet been formalised into recommendations. However, they are detailed in this report to provide advance notice about the areas that remain to be addressed by the Group.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** that

Engagement recommendations: ensuring that the Redditch Partnership involves the public in its work:

- 1) following pre-scrutiny by the LSP Task and Finish Group, the proposed format and content of the Redditch Partnership's revamped website coverage, to be hosted by Redditch Borough Council, be endorsed;
- 2) an event, along the lines of the We are Redditch exhibition, be held every year in a form determined appropriate by Officers;
- 3) the Redditch Partnership and appropriate partners should publicise their work and invite public reaction by providing regular updates in Redditch Matters;

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- 4) the Redditch Partnership should hold and advertise an Annual Meeting, as required by the terms of the Partnership's protocol, which partners, potential partners and members of the public could attend;

Accountability recommendations: ensuring the transparency and openness of the partnership:

- 5) a new item be added to the full Council agenda requiring the Leader of the Council to deliver regular updates on the work of the Redditch Partnership since the previous meeting of the Council;
- 6) the Leader of the Council formally deliver an Annual Report to the last scheduled full Council meeting of the municipal year covering the work of the Redditch Partnership by formalising the current practice of delivering an annual "State of the Borough" address;
- 7) information about the Redditch Partnership and LSPs should be provided for Members' consideration as part of the Member induction process;
- 8) a training event focusing on LSPs should be provided as a standard part of the Member training programme each year;

and RESOLVE that

- 1) the Changing Places report should be considered as part of the subsequent Local Area Agreement Task and Finish review; and
- 2) the membership of the Local Area Agreement Task and Finish Group should be drawn from the membership of the LSP Task and Finish Group.

3. **Financial, Legal, Policy, Risk and Climate Change / Carbon Management Implications**

Financial

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications. However, appropriate funds need to be allocated to support the member training programme each year. Currently, there is an annual budget of £2,740 for Member training (though each Councillor also receives an additional personal training allowance of £300). Standard training events and additional training activities need to be funded using this budget.

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Legal

- 3.2 There are no legal implications.

Policy

- 3.3 The Council's constitution outlines the standard items which are included on a full Council agenda. The constitution would need to be amended to require the Leader of the Council to deliver an update on the work of the Redditch Partnership as a regular item on the full Council agenda. Similarly, the proposed requirement for the Leader of the Council to deliver an Annual Report on the subject of the Redditch Partnership would require amendments to the Council's constitution.

Risk

- 3.4 No risks have been identified.

Climate Change / Carbon Management

- 3.5 There are no climate change or carbon management implications.

Report

4. Background

- 4.1 The LSP Task and Finish review was launched in January 2010. The Group consists of five members: Councillor Norton who chairs the Group and Councillors Cookson, Fry, Hopkins and Thomas.
- 4.2 The Group were commissioned to undertake this review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The review was launched after Members expressed concerns about the degree to which Members, particularly non-executive Members, were involved with and had knowledge about the work of the Redditch Partnership.
- 4.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also agreed that the subject was appropriate for review because of the important role of the LSP in developing the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). The Redditch SCS is a three-year strategy which is designed to provide a vision for the local area. The strategy comprises of themes and subsidiary priorities which the partner organisations represented on the Redditch Partnership, including Redditch Borough Council, all commit to deliver. The Redditch SCS is scheduled to be reviewed and refreshed in 2010.
- 4.4 The LSP Task and Finish Group have held a number of meetings and agreed some initial conclusions. This report has been presented at an early stage in the review to provide an opportunity for the

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Group's recommendations to inform Council procedures from 2010/11.

5. Key Issues

- 5.1 The Redditch Partnership, as a LSP, is a non-statutory body. However, Redditch Borough Council, as the local authority in the area, has a responsibility to work with local partner organisations to develop the SCS in partnership with other local partner organisations. The coordination of this process through the LSP is considered the most appropriate way to secure collective agreement to the strategic vision and priorities contained within the SCS.
- 5.2 The work of the Redditch Partnership is coordinated by a Management Board, though more focussed, subject specific work is undertaken by various standing Theme Groups and Task and Finish Groups. The LSP's Management Board and subsidiary groups are held to account by the wider membership of the Redditch Partnership.
- 5.3 The work of the Redditch Partnership and content of the SCS is informed by the targets contained within the Worcestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA). This agreement is developed by the County's LSP, the Worcestershire Partnership, and sets the targets against which the performance of local partner organisations is measured.
- 5.4 Some local elected Councillors are actively involved in the work of the Redditch Partnership. The Leader of the Council has traditionally been a member of the LSP Management Board and is currently the Chair of the Partnership. The Deputy Leader of the Council and the leader of the largest opposition group on the Council are also members of the Management Board, alongside a County Councillor for the Borough. However, no non-executive Councillors are currently members of the Management Board or of any of the subsidiary groups.

6. Recommendations and Resolutions

- 6.1 The LSP Task and Finish Group have agreed a number of recommendations and are also suggesting some resolutions for Members' consideration.

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- 6.2 Recommendation 1: We recommend that following pre-scrutiny by the LSP Task and Finish Group, the proposed format and content of the Redditch Partnership's revamped website coverage, to be hosted by Redditch Borough Council, be endorsed.**
- 6.2.1 During the course of the review the Group have concluded that further work needs to be undertaken to communicate the work of the Redditch Partnership to local stakeholders. They have recognised that website coverage is a useful communications tool that could be used to promote the work of the partnership.
- 6.2.2 The Redditch Partnership does not have a designated website. Instead, information about the partnership is provided on Redditch Borough Council's website. The Group has reviewed the existing content of these Web Pages and concluded that they were not fit for purpose. They suggested that alterations be made to improve these web pages, in accordance with an example of best practice developed by Stevenage Borough Council for their LSP.
- 6.2.3 The Group subsequently pre-scrutinised Officers' suggestions for altering the relevant section on the Council's website. These alterations include: proposals to provide general information about LSPs, information about the Redditch Partnership; information about the SCS and a link to the current version of that document; and links to the partnership's terms of reference and Worcestershire Partnership's website. The Group were satisfied that this represented a positive set of proposals and recommend that they should be endorsed.
- 6.3 Recommendation 2: We recommend that an event, along the lines of the 'We are Redditch' exhibition, be held every year in a form determined appropriate by Officers.**
- 6.3.1 The "We are Redditch" event was a consultation event which took place throughout a week in January 2010 in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre. This provided an opportunity for members of the Redditch Partnership to promote their work as well as the work of the LSP to the public. It also provided a useful opportunity for the partnership to consult with approximately 264 members of the public over the issues that they felt should be prioritised by the LSP and relevant partner organisations.
- 6.3.2 The Group are aware that this is the first time that this type of consultation event has been organised and delivered by the Redditch Partnership. The partnership has already considered the outcomes of the event and recommended improvements for the future. The Group have concurred that these recommended improvements should be endorsed as they would add value to future

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consultation events and that similar events should be held every year.

6.4 Recommendation 3: We recommend that the Redditch Partnership and appropriate partners should publicise their work and invite public reaction by providing regular updates in Redditch Matters.

6.4.1 The Group recognises that there is a need to promote information about the work of the Redditch Partnership using a variety of communication tools. Many members of the public do not have access to the internet or are more comfortable referring to traditional forms of written publication. The Council's magazine, Redditch Matters, is one publication which could be utilised to promote the work of the Redditch Partnership to this audience.

6.4.2 The potential significance of Redditch Matters for promoting the work of the LSP has already been recognised by the Redditch Partnership. An article introducing residents to the Redditch Partnership appeared in the Spring 2010 edition of Redditch Matters. The Group have agreed that this practice should be extended to all following editions of the magazine and should encompass reports on both the work of the Redditch Partnership and the related work of partner organisations.

6.5 Recommendation 4: We recommend that the Redditch Partnership should hold and advertise an Annual Meeting, as required by the terms of the Partnership's protocol, which partners, potential partners and members of the public could attend.

6.5.1 The Redditch Partnership has set terms of reference which are detailed in a 'Partnership Agreement and Protocol' (September 2008). This protocol contains a commitment for there to be an annual meeting of the overarching Redditch Partnership to hold the LSP's Management Board, Theme Groups and Task and Finish Groups to account.

6.5.2 The Group are concerned that a meeting of the overarching Redditch Partnership has not taken place since the State of the Borough Conference in 2007. They agree that this urgently needs to be addressed and that the overarching Redditch Partnership meets annually. The meeting should also be organised to take place in time for the overarching partnership to review the contents of the refreshed SCS.

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6.6 Recommendation 5: We recommend that a new item be added to the full Council agenda requiring the Leader of the Council to deliver regular updates on the work of the Redditch Partnership since the previous meeting of the Council.

6.6.1 During the course of their review the members of the Group have reached the conclusion that many local Councillors, particularly non-executive Councillors, are unfamiliar with the work of the Redditch Partnership. The majority of elected Members are not members of the Redditch Partnership and do not actively engage with the LSP.

6.6.2 The Group have expressed concerns about this level of Councillor engagement with the Redditch Partnership. They have concluded that this demonstrates that there is both a lack of transparency to the LSP process and a democratic deficit.

6.6.3 The Leader of the Council is, however, actively involved in the work of the Redditch Partnership. The Group have recognised that the Leader of the Council's role on the Redditch Partnership has changed over the past few years, resulting in the relatively recent appointment of the current Leader as Chair of the Management Board. However, the Group believe that it will always be appropriate for the Leader of the Council to be appointed to the Management Board in some capacity.

6.6.4 The Leader of the Council currently delivers regular reports on the subject of the Leader's activities at meetings of full Council. These are delivered as part of a standard 'Leader's Questions' item. Information about the work of the Redditch Partnership could be provided under this item. However, the members of the Group have expressed concerns that this would result in such updates being delivered alongside a variety of other reports. This could lead to a lack of clarity about which activities and initiatives had been delivered by the Redditch Partnership rather than another body.

6.6.5 The Group believe that the LSP is an important subject which should be discussed at the meetings of full Council. The explicit references to the Redditch Partnership in the Leader's reports under a designated item would help to reinforce the transparency of the process for the benefit of both elected Councillors and members of the public.

6.6.6 The Group recognise that whilst full Council meets on a monthly basis the Redditch Partnership's Management Board meets every six weeks. Therefore, at some full Council meeting the Leader may not have any new information to provide for the consideration of Members. However, the Group agrees that the report on the subject of the LSP should be retained as a standard item at each full Council

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meeting to ensure that Members have a source of information about the LSP where needed and an opportunity to ask regular questions about the work of the partnership.

6.7 Recommendation 6: We recommend that the Leader of the Council formally deliver an Annual Report to the last scheduled full Council meeting of the municipal year covering the work of the Redditch Partnership by formalising the current practice of delivering an annual “State of the Borough” address

- 6.7.1 The Redditch Partnership’s protocol contains a commitment for an Annual Report on the subject of the Redditch Partnership to be delivered at a meeting of full Council. However, this Annual Report has not been delivered since the protocol was approved in September 2008.
- 6.7.2 The Group have recognised that informal reference might have been made to the work of the Redditch Partnership during the course of full Council meetings. However, the Group have expressed concerns that such informal reports have not helped to develop elected Members’ familiarity with the work of the partnership.
- 6.7.3 The Group are in agreement that the formal delivery of an Annual Report at a meeting of full Council on the subject of the Redditch Partnership would address this problem. A report from the Leader would enhance the transparency of the work of the LSP and strengthen the accountability of the partnership.
- 6.8 Recommendation 7: We recommend that information about the Redditch Partnership and LSPs should be provided for Members’ consideration as part of the Member Induction process.**
- 6.8.1 The Members’ Induction process forms an important part of the introductory training for newly elected Councillors. Currently, information is provided about a variety of issues including: local democratic processes; member support arrangements; local government finance; Council housing and the senior management structure. Many new Councillors find this induction process to be invaluable because it introduces them to local government and to some of the many issues they need to be familiar with in order to support their constituents effectively.
- 6.8.2 Presently information about LSPs and, more specifically, the Redditch Partnership, is not provided as part of this Member Induction process. However, the members of the Group are in agreement that as an important local body details about both LSPs and the Redditch Partnership should be provided as part of the Member Induction process.

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6.8.3 The Group have been informed that the Member Induction process is fairly flexible and can be adapted on request. It is anticipated that some new Councillors will be elected during the local elections in May 2010. Therefore, the Group are proposing that this alteration to the Member Induction process should be approved as soon as possible to ensure that it shapes induction processes from 2010/11.

6.9 Recommendation 8: We recommend that a training event focusing on LSPs should be provided as a standard part of the Member training programme each year.

6.9.1 At Redditch Borough Council a number of standard training events take place each year. This includes training which members of quasi-judicial Committees are required to undertake each year, though other standard training arrangements have been introduced at the request of Members and Officers. Currently Councillors are invited to attend training courses each year on the following subjects: planning processes; Licensing procedures; local government finance; Council housing; the Standards Code of Conduct; ICT training and social networking.

6.9.2 The Group have concluded that, due to the significant role of the Redditch Partnership, a training event focussing on LSPs should be provided on a yearly basis as part of the Member training programme. The Group have been advised that the Member training programme at the Council is fairly flexible and could be altered in accordance with Members' recommendations. Therefore, they are proposing that this addition to the standard items on the Member training programme should be approved as soon as possible to ensure that it informs training arrangements from 2010/11.

6.10 Resolution 1: The Changing Places report should be considered as part of the subsequent Local Area Agreement Task and Finish review.

6.10.1 The review of the Redditch Partnership was originally proposed as part of a wider exercise that would also have involved a review of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognised the value that could potentially be accrued from scrutinising both subjects. However, they concluded that it would be more effective to review the two topics separately and that the review of the LSP should take place first because the conclusions reached during the course of this exercise would inform the subsequent assessment of the LAA.

6.10.2 The Changing Places report, 'Changing Places: Local Area Agreements and Two-Tier Local Government' (September 2008), focuses on best practice in the management of both LSPs and LAAs

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in areas of two-tier local government. The Group have considered the details contained within this report relating to LSPs. They have concluded that the information contained within the report on the subject of LAAs is comprehensive and that it would be useful to further assess this information during the review of the LAA.

6.11 Resolution 2: the membership of the Local Area Agreement Task and Finish Group should be drawn from the membership of the LSP Task and Finish Group.

6.11.1 The Group are aware that the LSP and the LAA are complex, interconnected subjects. Through their review they are developing familiarity with both subjects. They therefore are suggesting that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider appointing the members of the LSP Task and Finish Group to the LAA review to ensure that their expertise can be utilised in that subsequent exercise.

7. Forthcoming issues - Performance Management: Assessing the Current effectiveness of the partnership and developing a mechanism for the scrutiny of its future conduct.

7.1 The Group agree that performance management of the Redditch Partnership is an important issue to assess during the course of their review. They do not yet believe that they are in a position to reach conclusions or to advance formal recommendations on this subject at this stage. However, they have considered a number of options in relation to this subject which will be considered in further detail at subsequent meetings. These are detailed below and should not be regarded as mutually exclusive.

7.2 Option 1: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee could pre-scrutinise the contents of the draft SCS as a standard arrangement.

7.3 Option 2: (Following on from this) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could post scrutinise the success of the SCS as a standard arrangement.

7.4 Option 3: There could be six monthly monitoring of performance in relation to each version of the SCS and / or the LSP as a whole by an appropriate body. (Most probably this would be the Overview and Scrutiny Committee). This might involve reference to the Redditch Partnership's internal performance management framework. (The Partnership's performance management framework remains to be adopted, though is scheduled to be reviewed by the LSP in due course).

7.5 Option 4: further information will be considered and potentially recommendations produced on the subject of the Redditch Partnership's response to the red flag areas that were identified in

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the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process. These related to perceived quality of life inequalities in the Borough, specifically educational attainment levels and health inequalities.

8. Other Implications

- Asset Management - There are no asset management implications.
- Community Safety - There are no community safety implications.
- Health - The Redditch Partnership is coordinating work within the Borough to address the health inequalities that were identified in the recent CAA process. Regular updates, as detailed in one of the performance management options, would help to ensure that all Members were kept informed of the Partnership's progress.
- Human Resources - The requirement for the Leader of the Council to deliver an Annual Report for the consideration of full Council could have an impact on the workload of the staff employed to support the Redditch Partnership. Consideration may therefore need to be given to the level of support provided to the partnership.
- Social Exclusion - There are no social exclusion implications.
- Environmental / Sustainability / - There are no environmental/ sustainability implications.

9. Lessons Learnt

No lessons have been learned in the production of this report.

10. Background Papers

Changing Places: Local Area Agreements and Two-Tier Local Government, (Local Government Association, September 2008).

Redditch Partnership: Partnership Agreement and Protocol, (September 2008).

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Stevenage Borough Council Website: 'So Stevenage',
<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/townandcommunity/sostevenage>

11. Consultation

This report has been prepared following consultation by the Group with the Redditch Partnership Manager and Housing Strategy and LSP Manager.

12. Author of Report

The author of this report is Jess Bayley (Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer), who can be contacted on extension 3268 (e-mail: jess.bayley@redditchbc.gov.uk) for more information.

13. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Table of the review's objectives

14. Key

CAA	-	Comprehensive Area Assessment
LAA	-	Local Area Agreement
LSP	-	Local Strategic Partnership
SCS	-	Sustainable Community Strategy

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Appendix 1: Objectives of the Review

OBJECTIVE	WHAT DO WE HAVE NOW?	IS IT WORKING?	WHAT DO WE WANT?
(1) Examine LSP to clarify how it works	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Presentation from officers</p>	<p>Unclear: 4 new T&F groups within the LSP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review SCS • communications • resource mapping • performance management framework 	<p style="text-align: center;">?</p> <p>Need more information about how the LSP works in practice</p>
(2) Review the role of the LSP in development of the SCS	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Presentation from officers</p>		
(3) Determine improvements to the role of the LSP		Overlap with Objective 1	<p style="text-align: center;">?</p> <p>Need more information</p>
(4) Examine the methods used to engage and inform Cllrs	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Nothing</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>No</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Agreed recommendations</p>
(5) Review accountability and transparency of the LSP		<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Needs improvement</p>	<p>Overlap with Objective 4</p> <p>Need more information</p>
(6) Financial contributions	<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p>Presentation from officers</p>		

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(7) Assess how the LSP intends to encourage wider engagement	✓ Presentation from officers	✓ Needs improvement	✓ Agreed way forward with officers
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