



## HARROW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

### Considering the Future of the Partnership Board

27<sup>th</sup> June 2013

<b>Introduction</b>
<p>This paper sets out the context in which the Harrow Partnership Board now operates, and the options open to the Board for its future.</p>
<b>Proposed Action</b>
<p>That the Board consider the impact that the Board currently has, which is set out in this report, and determine its role in taking partnership working forward.</p>
<b>Background</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Since the abolition of the Local Area Agreement in 2010, Local Strategic Partnerships across the Country have been puzzling over their role, trying to identify how they can add value to the many cross organisational conversations that take place as a matter of everyday business. With the reduction in resources available to most public sector organisations, there has been a tendency for pan-London organisations such as the Metropolitan Police to seek efficiencies through combining functions across areas and reducing the reliance on the Borough as the building block of service delivery. At the same time, the influence of sub-regional structures is growing as evidenced by the cluster arrangements for Clinical Commissioning Groups and the work of the West London Alliance.</li><li>2. In this context, Harrow Partnership Board has struggled to find a purpose and an agenda that commands the attention of the senior representatives of the partner organisations. The Board has continued to introduce and familiarise representatives with each other, receive and share information but it has not identified a significant programme of work or joint endeavour that demands its continuation in its current form. There have been few examples of agenda items proposed by partners.</li><li>3. The Board does, however, provide information to and a platform for individuals and groups who might otherwise not have an opportunity to contribute to shaping the future of Harrow. The degree to which contributions made through Board meetings influence the course of events is open to question.</li><li>4. The Harrow Assembly concept – which sought to expand the Partnership Board for the purpose of wider discussion around topical issues – has failed to become properly</li></ol>

established. There have been too few issues proposed and perhaps insufficient preparation for these meetings to succeed. There does, however, seem to be a continuing willingness to share and work together.

5. Partnership working and influencing the direction and detail of projects is largely undertaken by the two statutory partnership groups – the Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Harrow. Between them, these groups cover most of the potential partnership territory and the wellbeing remit of the Health and Wellbeing Board enables it to take an interest in any aspect of life in Harrow. Formal partnership activity can be channelled through these groups. The voluntary and community sector has representation on the Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Harrow could also again include sector representation.
6. In addition, the opportunity to hold summits with a wide invitation list to discuss matters of significance to a number of partners could be retained.
7. Harrow is not alone in facing this dilemma. A recent survey undertaken by Lewisham Council asked about the structure of Partnerships in London Boroughs and received 25 responses of which:
  - eight reported that their Partnership Board had been abolished and not replaced,
  - three reported that their Board was under review, and
  - one reported that the Board had been replaced by an informal Forum bringing together service and organisational leads but with no decision-making powers or budget.

## **Options**

8. There are a number of options for taking partnership working forward:
  1. Continue the existing arrangements,
  2. Devise a better version of the Harrow Assembly to replace the Board,
  3. Use the Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Harrow as the principle partnership vehicles underpinned by Harrow Chief Executives.

In all of the these options, the partnership bodies would continue or improve their reporting to each other, Cabinet and other groups and organisations as appropriate to ensure that partnership knowledge and actions are widely known
9. There have been several restructures of the way in which the Board works, its terms of reference and responsibilities. Over the last three years, none has succeeded in revitalising the Partnership Board and consideration should be given to whether the issue is indeed structural or whether the legitimate role of other partnership bodies has led to a lesser role for the Partnership Board.
10. The experience of the Assemblies suggests that there is little enthusiasm for purely informative meetings where an expert organisation informs the meeting about forthcoming plans. By contrast, the Summit meetings involving inviting more than 100

organisations and individuals to help develop thinking and to bring their experience and expertise to bear on an issue of common concern continue to appear popular although these can be held only occasionally.

- 11 Both the Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Harrow are statutory bodies that need to continue. Whatever else the Partnership decides, there is a need for these groups to establish better information sharing arrangements with each other and with Harrow Chief Executives which should report for information to the Cabinet and HCE representatives from other organisations may cascade information through their internal channels.
12. Also, Voluntary and Community Sector representation will continue on the Health and Wellbeing Board and suitable representation on Safer Harrow could be sought. The pattern of quarterly meetings between sector representatives and the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive will also continue.
13. The difficulty, should the Board be discontinued, is how to replace the platform it provides to a range of organisations in the Borough to make their opinions known and to share information. If the Board decides that the Board should be discontinued, officers could be asked to start discussions to identify the need and proposals for meeting it and report to Harrow Chief Executives with options.