



Harrow Strategic Partnership Board

14th June 2007

The Local Government White Paper and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill

Implications for the Harrow Strategic Partnership

The HSP Board is asked to:

1. Note the report

Purpose of this report

This report summarises the key partnership implications of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2006.

Background

Local authorities have been leading the development of local strategic partnerships for a number of years. The roles of local strategic partnerships (LSPs) have generally been seen as:

- Supporting the development and implementation of a Sustainable Community Plan for the area
- Integrating and co-ordinating local partnership arrangements between agencies, and also involving the community, voluntary and business sectors
- Providing a mechanism to negotiate Local Area Agreements involving a range of agencies

The White Paper presents a case for modernising the way local authorities operate and enabling local partners to respond more flexibly to local needs through the reduction of top-down control from central government. The White Paper is also concerned with enabling residents and communities to play their part.

The Government published the Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' at the end of October 2006. The Local Government and Public Health Bill was subsequently introduced in mid-December 2006.

Included in the White Paper is a wide range of proposals. The proposals, which directly impact on or involve the HSP and are being progressed through the new bill, are set out below.

Key Partnership Elements of the Bill

The White Paper states that Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are a strong feature of the local authority and broader community landscape with a key role to play in tackling crosscutting issues.

Specifically the White Paper proposes: -

- Strengthening the key role of the local authority in coordinating and ensuring active involvement of elected members in the LSP and its activities;
 - Describing the LSPs main tasks as the preparation of the Sustainable Community Plan and Local Area Agreement (LAA); and
 - Planning more formalised representation of the voluntary and community sector on LSPs
- a. *Reinforcing the strategic leadership of councils in the LSP and its thematic sub-partnerships*

Currently local authorities are required to consult partners and the community when developing the Sustainable Community Plan. This will be extended to also include the duty for local authorities to prepare the Local Area Agreement, in consultation with others as well. This currently occurs through involvement of the Harrow Strategic Partnership and the sub thematic partnerships but the duty will now formalise this process.

The leadership role of the council in relation to LSP is emphasised in the paper to ensure LSPs are accountable to local people. Council leaders will be expected to agree the chair of the LSP (if they do not take the chair themselves), and to play a key role. Members of council cabinets are also expected to play key roles, for example in the sub partnerships related to their portfolio.

b. *Strengthening local partnership working*

A duty will be placed on the local authority and named partners to co-operate with each other to agree targets and have regard to these targets in the LAA. This will also include the duty to ensure that the Sustainable Community Plan and other local and regional plans have regard for each other e.g. the Sustainable Community Plan and the Local Development Framework (LDF).

The organisations, that are included within the duty to co-operate, are:

Local authorities	Youth offending teams
Police authorities and chief constables	Sport England
Local Probation Boards	The Environment Agency
Fire and rescue authorities	The Health and Safety Executive
Waste disposal authorities	The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission
Highway authorities	Learning and Skills Councils
Primary Care Trusts	Natural England
Regional Development Agencies	

Voluntary and community sector bodies are also expected to be involved in the preparation of the Sustainable Community Plan and LAA. In addition, the paper recognises the vital role of the business community in both local economic development and in the improvement of services.

The partners that are required to cooperate in setting LAA targets, will also be placed under a new legal duty to take part in council scrutiny, appearing before scrutiny reviews and/or providing information, and having regard to recommendations made by scrutiny committees.

The Bill encourages the development of a comprehensive community engagement strategy by the local authority. The Community Engagement Strategy will need to take into account partnership responsibilities such as involving resident and community involvement in the development of the local strategic vision and streamlining procedures for involving communities in the creation of Sustainable Community Plans, LAAs and LDFs to avoid 'consultation overload'.

c. Partnership working at the heart of service delivery

Currently local authorities and partners can enter into local area agreements voluntarily. These agreements will now be placed upon a statutory footing with the Council being the "responsible local authority".

Central Government will be producing a new, single set of 200 outcomes and indicators, which will be aligned with the outcomes and indicators for public sector partners.

The structure of LAAs as four blocks will be retained, although the fourth block, 'Economic development' will become Economic Development and the Environment and will include culture.

The new funding arrangements set out in the White Paper are a significant departure from the current arrangements. In the existing LAA framework, the pooling of area-based funding streams is linked to the establishment of targets in the LAA. In the future arrangements, local authorities and partners will use a variety of funding sources to deliver the national

indicators e.g. Council tax, other mainstream funding (police, PCT), formula grant, Single Capital Pot, ring fenced grants as well as the unringfenced, area-based LAA grant. In effect, all funding streams in an area now support delivery against the indicator set and improvement targets.

d. Comprehensive Area Assessment

In 2009, the Comprehensive Area Assessment will be introduced to replace the CPA Harder Test as the new performance assessment framework for local authorities. This regime will be forward-looking and focus on identifying future performance risks and resident experience and perspectives. The performance risks of the new Local Area Agreements, as assessed through the annual reviews with GOL, will contribute towards the local authorities overall Comprehensive Area Assessment judgement. The assessment will also inform the negotiation of any revisions to the LAA, including new improvement targets.

e. Community Cohesion

The White Paper acknowledges the challenge of achieving cohesion in diverse communities. It also acknowledges the critical role of local authorities and partners in delivering a more equal society. It proposes that: -

- Local authorities will have a bigger role in countering terrorism by working with police and in communities
- The profile of community cohesion issues should be raised locally through targets in LAAs, at the LSP and in Sustainable Community Plans

f. Efficient delivery of services

It is anticipated that the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 will require ambitious efficiency gains. Government is encouraging local authorities to ensure that their services are competitive e.g. through outsourcing to the private sector, cross borough partnerships or inviting the voluntary and community sector to provide services, and to challenge the status quo to ensure services are being efficiently delivered.

A number of outcomes are best delivered through co-operation across partners within Harrow and also across geographical boundaries and between local and regional authorities. The white paper proposes further development of Multi Area Agreements, which will be linked to individual authority's LAAs with shared outcome-based targets and pooled funding. The development of MAAs will be voluntary.

HSP Position

- a. Once central government has released their national indicators, Harrow Strategic Partnership will need to agree which indicators are improvement priorities for the borough and agree the set, plus targets, with central government to form the new LAA..
- b. The HSP needs to start identifying what service areas require improvement based on the community plan, outcome of the corporate assessment and joint area review, service delivery reviews and the existing local area agreement. It is suggested that a Summit should be held in the autumn to assist in determining the shape of the new LAA and to ensure involvement of the wider community.
- c. There is a need to improve the pooling of resources and shared services. This approach is encouraged by central government and will need to be integrated into Harrow's new local area agreement.
- d. The new local area agreement will be the main delivery vehicle for the new Comprehensive Area Assessment that will be introduced in 2009 to replace the existing corporate assessments of local government. This will place a greater onus on the partnership to have the capacity to analyse performance and priorities improvements and assess performance risks.

What Next

While the White Paper details initial proposals, these still need to be drafted, debated and ratified by Parliament before becoming legislation. It is anticipated that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill will achieve Royal Assent in Autumn 2007, subject to Parliamentary approval. Further reports will be submitted to the Board as the stages set out below are reached to keep members informed of progress.

Timetable for new LAA Framework

March 2007	Road show on the future development of Local Area Agreements
April 2007	Begin pre-scoping work for new LAA arrangements
September	Regional road shows to discuss LAA guidance package and implementation arrangements. Clarification of what will be in place for 08/09 operational year and what will remain for 09/10 operational year
October	Consult on Sustainable Community Plan priorities, preparing material for transitional/annual review which will include proposed improvement targets
December	Consult on new LAA outcomes frameworks, funding plans and performance arrangements
January	Negotiation of improvement targets based on departmental and GOL discussions and LA/LSP consultations
March	Ministerial sign-off

Paul Najsarek
Director, People, Performance and Policy

Appendix on Parish Councils

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill provides for Parish Councils to be established in London. The mechanism for establishing Parishes is not yet clear although if a petition signed by an as yet unspecified number of residents is delivered to a principal council, it will have to decide whether or not to allow a parish to be created. There are suggested criteria by which principal councils could determine a petition including whether the proposal enhances or diminishes community cohesion and whether the area already has sufficient governance. Another route could be for a petition to result in a principal council deciding whether or not to parish its entire area.

Objectors to parishes point to the prospect of these small councils being controlled by unrepresentative groups, possibly due to very small turnouts at elections. Parish boundaries could also drawn in a socially divisive manner to exclude social housing areas for example. The tax base of parishes could vary significantly creating new social divisions between areas, which could provide very different levels of services.

Proponents of parishes suggest that they could promote further and better community engagement and lead to more local control over services. They point to the scheme in Milton Keynes where the principal council equalises the resources between parishes by awarding different levels of grants to the parishes within its boundaries as a means of overcoming social division.

The position of most if not all councils in London is to oppose parishes on the grounds set out above. In addition, the Board might consider that community engagement is encouraged by attitudes and organisational culture rather than by structures and that the greater the community focus on a small locality, the greater the chances of opposition to even beneficial change in that area.