

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

**FROM: PROJECT AND PROGRAMME
EXECUTIVE**

REPORT NUMBER **G230**

**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
(COMMUNITY SERVICES)
COMMITTEE**

DATE OF MEETING 25 March 2008

REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To advise Members of the outcome of the review of Strategic Partnerships.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the existing arrangements for Babergh's participation in the following partnerships be continued:-

Babergh East Local Strategic Partnership
Babergh Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
Western Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership

2.2 That the Council approaches the Haven Gateway Partnership seeking the inclusion of the whole of the area of the Babergh District within the Haven Gateway.

2.3 That further consideration be given to the Council's position regarding the Suffolk Development Agency when the outcome of the reviews referred to in paragraph 5.4(d) are known.

The Committee is asked to make recommendations to Strategy Committee.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Undertaking the reviews involved officer time. If the recommendations are supported by Members, then there are no additional financial implications at the present time other than continued office time.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1

Risk Description	Likelihood	Seriousness or Impact	Mitigation Measures
The Council spends its involvement in a wide range of partnerships too thinly.	C – Significant	II – Critical	Review and streamline membership of partnerships on a regular basis to ensure limited resources are focused on what matters.

5. **KEY INFORMATION**

5.1 At its meeting on 4 December the Committee agreed the criteria, methodology and timetable of a review of the Council's strategic partnerships. It was agreed that it be a two-stage review with phase one concentrating on the following five partnerships:-

- Babergh Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
- Babergh East Local Strategic Partnership
- Haven Gateway Partnership
- Suffolk Development Agency
- Western Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership

5.2 Following research of 'best practice' by the Audit Commission and the Improvement and Development Agency each partnership was assessed against various criteria under four headings :-

- Geographical fit
- Effective governance
- Scale of critical issues
- Sustainability/Capacity

The research was undertaken either via a questionnaire or face-to-face interviews. A detailed summary is attached as Appendix 1, but if any member requires more details then this is available from Denise Revell in Corporate Services (Tel: 01473 826612). It must be stressed that although the assessment has been thorough, the number of people engaged has been limited to primarily a representative of another agency serving on the body plus Babergh's Councillors and officer representatives.

5.3 Members recently indicated they would like more information on the structure of LSPs within Suffolk, and the current funding arrangements and linkages with the Local Area Agreement. This is detailed in Appendix 2.

5.4 The conclusions and recommendations reached for each of the five partnership reviews based on the summary in Appendix 1 and other relevant information is set out below:-

(a) **Babergh Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership**

This is a properly constituted organisation with a detailed three-year strategy and annual action plan. It is generally well supported with a statutory obligation for many of the key players to fully participate. The Partnership supports delivery of Babergh's Corporate Objective relating to Safe and Clean.

There is currently a Western CDRP (covering St Edmundsbury, Forest Heath and Mid Suffolk areas) and the police are keen for Babergh's CDRP to join that partnership as it would also be co-terminus to the Police Western Basic Command Unit.

Having considered the results of the consultation and the ability of this partnership, based on its co-terminus boundary, to make a real contribution to a Babergh Corporate Objective (safe environment), there is a strong

argument to make no change. This is reinforced by recent announcements on local government review which means it would be prudent to await the outcome of the future shape of local government in Suffolk. No change is therefore recommended.

(b) Babergh East Local Strategic Partnership

This is a properly constituted body with terms of reference. Attendance at meetings is good and key players attend. The LSP has had two formal Community Plans with the second one being subject to a minor revamp recently following some research. This has enabled the Board to allocate some very limited funding to a specially set up multi-agency group to address some issues in Hadleigh.

Overall the majority of concerns centred around the following:-

- Geographical area covered is too small and thus unable to be really effective.
- Lack of significant issues, with no 'burning platform' meaning there are no tangible out-puts and outcomes. Thus unable to attract partner investment of staff and resources as there are other more urgent imperatives elsewhere.
- Lack of dedicated resources i.e no co-ordinator
- Inability to address Babergh's priorities
- Unsustainable as an LSP in its present form.

Although there are a number of clearly defined issues facing the LSP the dilemma is the number of options as a way forward for which there is no one overall consensus. These options are as follows:-

- a) Continue with the present arrangements, in view of the work ongoing in Hadleigh, and pending local government review.
- b) Pursue a merger with the Mid Suffolk LSP. Mid Suffolk District Council have indicated that if there are identifiable benefits from coming together, then they have an open mind about a merger and are happy to discuss the matter further.
- c) Seek to be included within the Western Suffolk LSP which would fit the needs of one partner.

Whilst option b) has considerable merit it will inevitably consume a lot of officer time and involve many months of work to establish a joint LSP and priorities. This work is likely to then be overtaken by the future shape of local government in Suffolk. Much the same case can be argued of option c). The LSP has recently identified a range of issues in Hadleigh and agreed a way forward using a multi-agency approach. The resulting Action Plan supports Babergh's Corporate Objectives relating to a safe environment and healthy living. This work will need monitoring. Furthermore the LSP has received further, albeit modest, funding which it has to allocate at future meetings. In the circumstances there is a good case to support the present arrangements and therefore option a) is recommended.

(c) Haven Gateway Partnership

This is a strong partnership of local authorities and the port authorities. It is fully constituted with good attendance by key decision makers, represents good value for money and addresses many of Babergh's priorities.

There are significant arising issues from the review concerning geographical fit. Currently all of the area of the Babergh East LSP is within the Haven Gateway. The Haven Gateway Partnership would welcome the opportunity to discuss the possibility of the remainder of the Babergh area seeking to join together with the implications of such a proposal.

Some Members have expressed concerns and anxieties over applying to include the rest of the district in the Haven Gateway Partnership in that it could lead to more growth. There is no evidence to suggest this but there is no doubt that including the rest of the district, if it were agreed, could be misinterpreted and seen as an acknowledgement of the acceptance of growth.

On the other hand the aims and objectives of the Haven Gateway Partnership, and the funding available to it, may provide the opportunity for the challenges in the west of the district, primarily in Sudbury and Great Cornard, to be successfully met. Subject to schemes that meet the growth agenda going forward in Babergh, there is a possibility of funding of substantial capital and revenue, including funding from Government and possibly the E.U. Furthermore, the HGP is a cross county organisation and its 3 year plan will continue irrespective of any changes that the local government review may have on Babergh or other local authorities.

The internal office development team has carefully assessed this matter and strongly favours applying to the Haven Gateway Partnership for the remainder of the Babergh district to be included and this report recommends accordingly.

(d) Suffolk Development Agency

This is a sub-regional economic partnership delivering necessary economic development on a bigger scale than district level which is important for Babergh. It is properly constituted with its own terms of reference and constitution. There was a wide range of views expressed about the partnership.

However, significantly, EEDA are currently carrying out a review of partnership organisations across the region including the SDA. This review was announced after Babergh's review of Strategic Partnerships had commenced. Furthermore, Suffolk Local Authorities are seeking advice on the best arrangements for taking forward the economic development of Suffolk in partnership with business and other stakeholders. Consequently, it is not felt Babergh should do anything further pending the outcome of the existing reviews which will ultimately determine the future of the Suffolk Development Agency.

(e) Western Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership

The review of this partnership raised no issues. Governance issues are good, it is a good geographical fit and the Partnership is able to address Babergh priorities. There are tangible outputs and outcomes, a range of critical issues considered and although a large partnership it is flexible and able to change as needs arise. It has also been able to influence regional agendas. No significant issues were raised in the review and no further action is recommended.

- 5.5 It is suggested that the original consultees and the Board of the Babergh East LSP be advised of the Committee's recommendations and that any views received be reported direct to Strategy Committee which will consider the matter at its meeting on 1 May 2008.

6. **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Summaries of research.
Appendix 2 - LSP structures and background.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Detailed partner questionnaire responses.

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Review of Strategic Partnerships

Babergh Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (BCDRP)

Cost

Internal staff costs - £77,000.

Direct funding - £5,000.

Geographic Fit

The Babergh Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (BCDRP) covers the whole of Babergh district area. Overall, the geographic fit is appropriate. There are benefits to be gained by joining with the Western Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, such as dealing with only one LSP and accessing more services in the west which Babergh CDRP cannot afford to commission on its own.

However, there were reservations expressed such as joining with the West may result in resources being 'pulled' towards Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket. Babergh CDRP 'crosses' other boundaries (for example Youth Offending Services covers Bury and Ipswich) and this would not change if Babergh CDRP were to be subsumed into the western area.

From a Police perspective there are many positive benefits to be considered in Babergh CDRP considering becoming an equal partner in an enlarged Western Area CDRP that could be explored.

The results of the boundary review may determine the positioning of the Babergh Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

Effective Governance

Babergh CDRP is a formal "body" with its own constitution and terms of reference. The Council and other organisations fulfil their statutory obligation through their membership of this partnership. Generally, attendance at the meetings is both regular and inclusive. The key decision makers attend the meetings.

Scale of Critical Issues

There is provision in the Crime and Disorder Strategy for district issues. In general the priorities are set by the Police; however, Babergh is able to include its own particular priorities. The effectiveness of the partnership is monitored through the quarterly crime figures produced against the LAA targets and the success in aiming priorities at the areas needing special attention. Targets from the strategic assessment are monitored quarterly.

CDRPs have local focus. Overall opinion was that there was no evidence that the Babergh CDRP has any influence on regional agendas. The Police consider that the areas bordering Babergh district and their associated crime issues means that in isolation some of the more critical issues will be beyond the partnerships capabilities to have a meaningful impact. It is in this particular element that addressing Regional and Area agendas that there is strength in being an equal partner in a larger group.

Sustainability/Capacity

The consensus of opinion was that the partnerships programme fitted the needs of the majority of partners helping them to deliver their own objectives. The actions are agreed through the officer working group at which partners are represented. There was mixed opinion as to whether the partnership was robust enough to adapt to changes that may occur from the emerging shared services initiative; however, a lot of 'cross border' work with other groups was already in place.

Review of Strategic Partnerships

Babergh East Local Strategic Partnership

Cost

Internal staff costs - £4,000

Geographic Fit

Several comments were received relating to the inappropriateness of the area covered by the BELSP, which was mostly rural with one major centre (Hadleigh). In particular, it was too small to be effective and was not coterminous with the CDRP, constabulary and several of the agencies in the Partnership. One respondent felt that a fundamental weakness obstructing progress was BELSP's size and detachment from the rest of the district. On the other hand, another respondent felt the area was appropriate.

Effective Governance

Babergh East Local Strategic Partnership (BELSP) is a formal 'body' with its own constitution and terms of reference. Attendance to the meetings is good and key players attend with officer support, as required.

Scale of Critical Issues

Whilst one respondent said there was an identified range of critical/strategic issues to be addressed by the BELSP which could be developed, the majority of comments were to the contrary. Desk top research had not identified any critical issues. One view was that there may be a lack of understanding as to what the critical/strategic issues are for the Babergh East area and they were not aware that critical/strategic issues have been identified.

The consensus of opinion from respondents was that the BELSP was not big enough to influence regional agendas with only a marginal influence on the Haven Gateway Partnership and the SSP

There were differing views regarding whether or not the BELSP delivered individual objectives of the partners. On the one hand some said that there was very little delivery of partners' objectives, while on the other hand one respondent said their objectives were being delivered.

Sustainability/Capacity

Concerns were raised regarding lack of resources (financial and other) together with a lack of co-ordinator support.

The BELSP could change and adapt in the light of the emerging shared services initiative, but it is not sustainable in its present form. Furthermore, one respondent said that it would be difficult to imagine that an LSP representing only part of a District Council would be able to influence the delivery of shared services.

One respondent welcomed further discussion on the possibility of BELSP either being fully coterminous with Babergh District Council Area or joining with the Western Suffolk LSP.

However, this respondent added that the least favoured option for them would be BELSP merging with Mid-Suffolk LSP, as coterminosity issues would remain.

Overall, the majority of comments raised many concerns including the effectiveness of the BELSP, the lack of dedicated resources and the lack of tangible outputs and outcomes.

Review of Strategic Partnerships

Haven Gateway Partnership

Cost

Internal staff costs - £15,000.

Direct funding - £6,000.

Geographic Fit

The geographical area covered by the Haven Gateway Partnership is appropriate, representing the single most important cluster of ports in the UK. The partnership itself is seen by the Government as an exemplar organisation and has recently attracted £17m funding from the Government Office.

Presently, only Babergh East is included in the Haven Gateway Partnership. If the whole of Babergh was to be included in the partnership it would be likely that Sudbury and Cornard could access Government development funding. The risk to this is that pressure might be put on these areas to increase development, as in growth areas. However, this has not happened in Hadleigh.

Effective Governance

Haven Gateway is a formal “body” with its own constitution and terms of reference. Senior members and officers, plus private sector members attend the meetings regularly.

Scale of Critical Issues

There is a range of critical issues addressed by the partnership concentrating on the delivery of the Government’s growth agenda, with development centred on Harwich, Colchester, Ipswich and Felixstowe together with the need to support the infrastructure in and around these hubs whilst protecting and enhancing the environment and rural hinterland. There is evidence of tangible outputs and outcomes such as:

- promoting economic opportunities
- securing future prosperity of the sub-region
- supporting the growth in housing and employment

The consensus of opinion from respondents was that the partnership was able to adequately influence regional agendas. Both EEDA and GoEast attend board meetings. Those consulted also agreed that the partnership was helping them to deliver their own objectives.

There was general agreement that critical success factors had been developed enabling the effectiveness of the partnership to be monitored. However, more needs to be done and the new Chief Executive is currently reviewing the monitoring process.

Sustainability/Capacity

There are already some emerging shared service's opportunities from the partnership. For example, a combined planning policy area covering Ipswich and the rural fringes adjacent to Ipswich, extending to Suffolk Coastal, Mid-Suffolk and Babergh.

Review of Strategic Partnerships

Suffolk Development Agency (SDA)

Cost

Internal staff costs - £3,000.
Direct funding - £30,000.

Geographical Fit

The Suffolk Development Agency is the sub-regional economic partnership for the whole of Suffolk and overlaps into areas covered by the Haven Gateway. As Babergh has economic links with neighbouring towns such as Colchester, the geographical area covered by the SDA is not necessarily right for Babergh. Also, the western part of Babergh does not 'fit in' with the eastern ports. It was felt that an east/west boundary would be more appropriate and that the boundary review may have an 'evolutionary' effect on the SDA.

The SSP also embraces all of Suffolk and there is some overlap with the SDA.

Effective Governance

Suffolk Development Agency (SDA) is a formal "body" with its own constitution and terms of reference. Meetings are attended by key decision makers. However, businesses do not necessarily have the time or inclination to attend if the issues do not directly affect them.

Scale of Critical Issues

The SDA produces a strategy, an annual business plan and leads on several areas of work on behalf of local authorities e.g. lobbying, inward investment, research etc. The main role and function of the SDA is to influence regional agendas.

The consensus of opinion was that the SDA was able to adequately influence regional agendas; which is one of its main roles. One respondent said that East of England Development Agency (EEDA) was promoting an agenda focused on urban issues in 'growth areas' and as a result many rural areas in the region were feeling marginalised. This situation applies to the SDA and other sub-regional economic partnerships, such as Norfolk.

Critical success factors are difficult to measure as the SDA is primarily a strategic body. There is a list of quantifiable outputs, individual projects are monitored and monthly, quarterly and annual monitoring reports are produced.

Sustainability/Capacity

To a greater or lesser extent the SDA helped partners to deliver their own objectives through the SDA Business Plan and the Expanding Suffolk's Horizons' Economic Strategy. Concerns were that the SDA no longer had a large budget and the less money

and staff it had, the less it could do. The EEDA decides what goes into the SDA's business plan, and directs the SDA to the areas of deprivation.

One respondent commented that it was unlikely that the SDA offered value for money but felt that a full financial analysis is required before an informed opinion or assessment could be given. Another respondent commented that shared officer services provided by the SDA represented good value. Furthermore, the economic development activities of the SDA were on a bigger scale than could be achieved at District level. The SDA also led on several areas of work on behalf of local authorities.

It is likely that the EEDA will further cut funding to the SDA and a review of regional partnerships is underway.

The SDA has a geographical/thematic approach which may change following the boundary review.

Review of Strategic Partnerships

West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership (WSLSP)

Cost

Internal staff costs - £11,000.

Direct funding - £10,000.

Geographic Fit

The geographical area covered by the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership (WSLSP) is appropriate; all partners have common interests and issues. The WSLSP is beneficial, in particular to Sudbury. However, Babergh has to lobby hard for its share of money for Sudbury.

Effective Governance

The WSLSP is a formal “body” with its own constitution and terms of reference. Meetings are attended by key decision makers.

Scale of Critical Issues

All respondents agreed that critical success factors had been developed enabling the effectiveness of the partnership to be monitored, and these are being further developed. Those consulted also agreed that the partnership was helping them to deliver their own objectives.

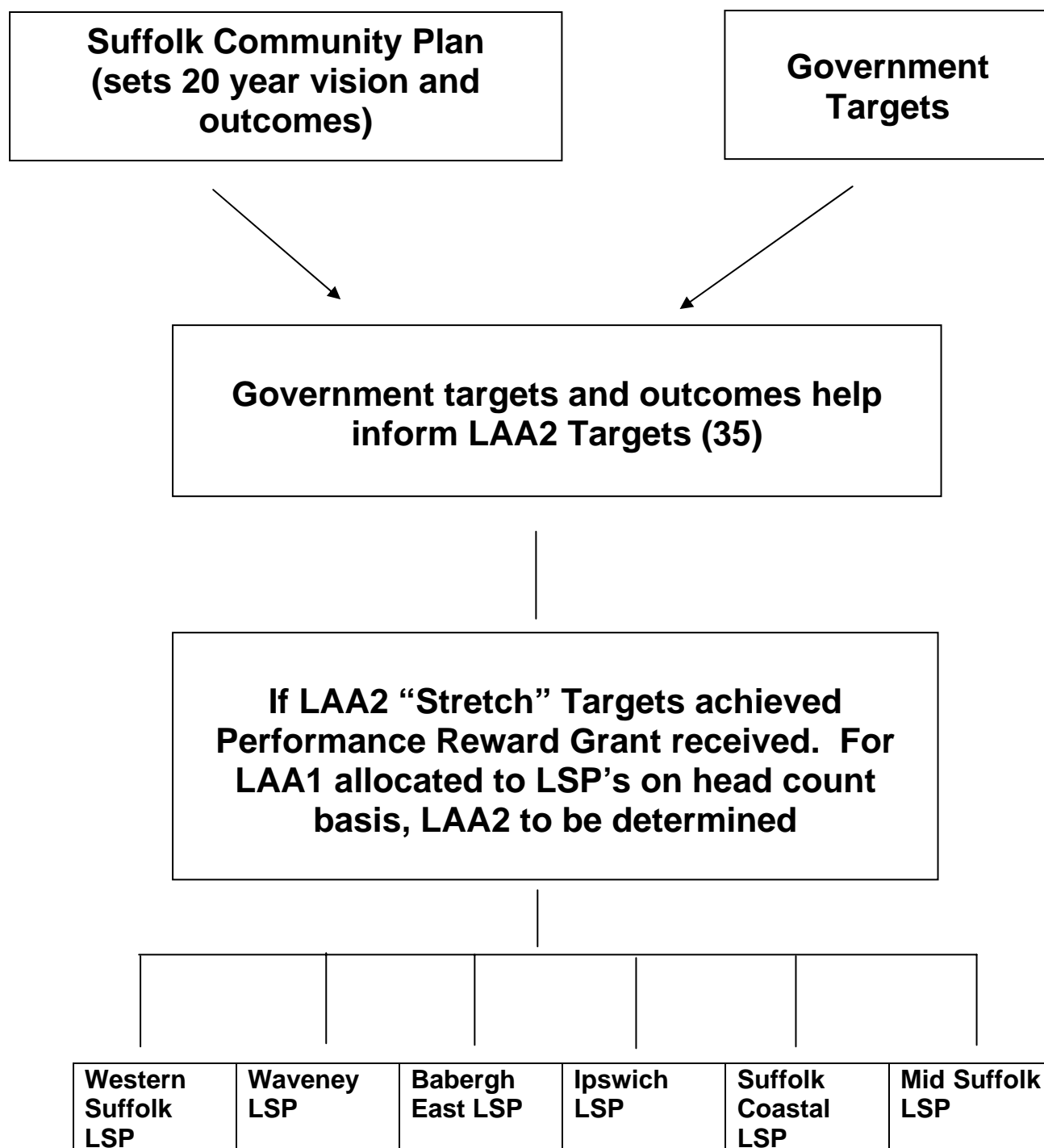
The WSLSP has been assessed as ‘okay’ by the self-diagnostic ‘A2P’ (Aspire to Perform) toolkit which enables LSPs to look at their processes, delivery and issues of working in a two tier area.

The WSLSP was able to influence regional agendas. One respondent said that there were too many LSPs and not all of them received a ‘good cascade’ from Suffolk Strategic Partnership.

Sustainability/Capacity

The consensus of opinion was that the partnership was sufficiently flexible to be able to adapt to changes that may occur from the Shared Services Initiative and that the membership had already changed several times to reflect changes in circumstances. Work was being undertaken with the Shared Services Initiative Group to see if more ‘joined up’ services could be identified.

One respondent added that they would like to do more to connect the two LSPs.



LSPs are bodies which do not have any statutory basis. They stem from a Government initiative to encourage better co-ordination and joint working across public, private, voluntary and community sectors to promote social and economic well-being in areas which match local authority boundaries.