

# Stratford District Partnership Development

## Workshop Report

by

Steve Rose

Local Improvement Advisor

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**STRATFORD DISTRICT  
PARTNERSHIP**

**STEVE ROSE**

CONSULTING

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### The Author

Steve Rose is an independent consultant specialising in Leadership, Partnerships and effective communication across sectors. He has managed at a senior level in the voluntary and public sectors having been Chief Executive of a range of organisations covering youth work, youth homelessness, community development and environmental regeneration. Most recently he has been the Chief Executive of Darlington Partnership – the LSP for the borough. Steve is a Local Improvement Advisor for the IDEa.

## 1) Introduction

The development workshop for Stratford District Partnership (SDP) was an assignment under the national Local Improvement Advisor (LIA) Programme (Ref: WM17/03/2010). It followed a period of activity and reflection on the desired role, function and impact of the District LSP by the key partners including officers of Stratford District Council (SDC) and Warwickshire County Council (WCC). Further focus was given to their development needs by their annual partnership conference of stakeholders held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2010 which gave some parameters for discussion at the workshop held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

Stratford is a district within the two-tier structures of Warwickshire. There is a county-wide Public Service Board (PSB) which manages all Area Based Grants (ABGs) and acts as the county local strategic partnership (LSP), overseeing the county sustainable community strategy (SCS) and local area agreement (LAA); all this is managed by WCC officers. The Leader of Stratford District Council (SDC) sits on the PSB by right and the Chair of SDP sits as an 'other attendee' in a non-voting capacity.

Stratford District Partnership has a clear structure that reflects those of many effective LSPs in England. It has a Chair who is a prominent member of the local business community and vice-chair drawn from outside the public sector. These positions are nominated each year by a Core Group comprising key stakeholders and chairs of themed groups. There have been six themed groups covering the expected LSP areas namely Children & Young People, Climate Change & Environment, Economic Development & Enterprise, Healthier Communities & Older People, Safer Communities and Stronger Communities. The theme groups are due to be rationalised following a similar exercise by the PSB.

Despite strong structures and positive relationships the Core Group of SDP were concerned that their prioritisation and action planning was not having the desired impact and that they needed some "time out" to reflect on how they may re-evaluate their approach.

The programme and content for the workshop was agreed in a briefing session held between the Chair, Vice-Chair, WCC Localities and Communities Manager and the LIA.

## 2) Aims & Objectives of the Workshop

Original Aims of Workshop (as per LIA assignment)

- To build stronger relationships between partners and greater buy in from themed groups
- To create a clearer focus about the role of the LSP Core Group within the wider structure
- To engender a commitment to managing performance of the partnership

Desired Outcomes (following pre-briefing)

- A clear set of action-based objectives for the Partnership to address within the context of two-tier working and relationship to the Warwickshire Public Service Board
- A clearer understanding of the needs of each member of the Core Group and what they want from the Partnership
- Agreement on how the Core Group operates and drives the LSP towards achieving its shared objectives
- Agreement on how performance will be managed and reported to the Core Group, the whole Partnership and the wider community

## 3) Programme

The programme (Appendix One, Slide 3) for such a short workshop of three hours was never going to be able to cover the three main outcome areas namely building relationships & understanding between partners, developing clear strategic objectives and to resolve process issues that may be hampering SDP's development.

As a result it was intended to touch on each area and for the LIA to then make firm proposals for further work based on his assessment of what took place in the workshop.

## 4) Workshop Participants

The workshop was well attended by members of the SDP Core Group and included most key stakeholders, elected members and officers from WCC and SDC as well as most themed group chairs. The commitment to the process was evident throughout the workshop as was a clear sense that relationships were mature and positive between partners.

The SDP chair gave a short introduction and handed over to the LIA for the duration of the workshop only taking on the role of chair again to summarise the workshop at the end. Whilst showing great commitment to the process he also demonstrated that he was keen for others to

be engaged and did not try to impose his own ideas and was also open to criticism of how SDP has progressed. His approach seemed to create a positive and honest atmosphere from which the workshop could develop.

A short exercise where participants quickly described what they did and didn't get from SDP highlighted a great degree of commonality. The general principled commitment to SDP, the networking opportunities and desire for positive outcomes were also matched by a general frustration with the links to PSB and the LAA as well as a feeling that there was a lot of talk without associated action. (Full notes can be found in Appendix Two)

## 5) Issues arising from the workshop

It was clear from the LIA briefing onwards that there were three main areas for SDP to develop. There were:

- Create a set of SMART objectives for real strategic issues for SDP to take forward in order to improve the lives of everyone who lives, works or visits Stratford District;
- Address issues of engagement, especially the co-relationship between SDP, the six county-led community forums and the district's 114 parishes;
- Address process issues including role of the Core Group, officer capacity and communication.

Following lively discussion and summaries as well as reflecting on the notes the suggestions for future development are as follows.

### a) Create "The Golden Thread"

There seems to be a lack of clarity about how the different parts of SDP link either upwards to county/PSB/LAA level or down to the community forums and Parish Councils. Although many do not like the term "Golden Thread", it does describe how the layers found in these processes need to be tied together to meet shared outcomes.

The famous, even hackneyed, story from the 60's of the management guru testing NASA's mission statement and how well staff understood it asked a man sweeping the paths what he was doing. "Sending people to the moon," he said – thus proving, to that guru anyway, that NASA's values and purpose were embedded throughout the organisation.

Can it be said that a member of a Stratford parish council or community forum understands how they are helping to deliver the county LAA? Do PSB spending decisions take cognisance

of Parish Plans? Are the strategic priorities of SDP inter-related to the county sustainable community strategy?

If the golden thread can be created in a way that can be demonstrated and explained at all levels the purpose of those levels starts to become clearer. For example, asking Stratford District Partnership members what is important for them is a worthy conversation to be held. To ask it, however, in the context of, say, the PSB priorities may give greater focus and to that discussion. So, for example, if the PSB has prioritised the engagement of young people in post-16 training why not interrogate that from a Stratford perspective to feed back to the PSB and also to give SDP a sense of clarity of its own needs within that context?

The level of understanding of the need to address this issue already exists in the Stratford teams as was demonstrated to the LIA through the workshop process. A coming together of SDC and WCC staff to provide benchmarking and a clear understanding of the needs at different levels is already starting to take place. As this continues a greater sense of understanding, engagement and action will result.

Other two-tier areas who have addressed these issues successfully can be confirmed by the IDeA. Wiltshire County Council and South Somerset District Council have both been mentioned as good practice on IDeA websites – further research may find more local examples.

Also included in this is the production of clear reporting mechanisms, action planning templates and resource mapping that is coherent across all levels and easy to understand by all stakeholders. This again was being discussed at the workshop by key officers who expressed a commitment to ensuring greater harmony of reporting would be created from WCC and PSB to the Parish councils and, indeed, wider community.

Finally, can SDP be said to be the “Partnership of Partnerships” in the district? The workshop discussion showed that other partnership configurations exist in the area but do not feed into SDP. Groups such as “World Class Stratford”, “StratForward” and the “Virtual District” are all examples of groups who may be a part of the LSP. The notion that an LSP coordinates effort and synthesises shared ideas may need further development in Stratford.

## **b) Strategic Issues to address**

Some clear issues have been identified that have resonance across themed groups as well as being directly linked to the WCC/PSB/LAA priorities. These can form tangible pieces of work for SDP to address in relation to the county LSP and PSB.

Issues are:

i) Create Balanced Communities

Objective: Ensure that demographic change does not produce an imbalance in Stratford's communities especially with regards to young people and families being able to afford to reside in the district.

Beacon District Councils for Affordable Housing (awarded 2005)

- Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
- East Hampshire District Council
- South Hams District Council, Devon

ii) Promote Active Communities

Objective: – To promote more active communities and civic participation by ensuring that each community has a vibrant town or parish plan, a good level of volunteering, where people are supported to live independent lives as well as having connections that are good because community transport options are available.

iii) Improve Access to Services

Objective: Improve access to services in rural locations and to different demographic groups. To use the network of Parish Councils and Community Forums to identify areas of weakness and deliver service change as a result.

Beacon District Council (awarded 2008)

- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

iv) Address Fuel Poverty

Objective: To identify communities, resident groups and individuals in Stratford District that are most affected by fuel poverty and to introduce a partnership approach to resolving their issues using best practice from elsewhere.

Beacon District Councils (awarded 2002):

- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Newark and Sherwood District Council.

v) Encourage Economic Growth

Objective: To improve GVA by ??% by 2030 by building on Stratford's historical, industrial and geographical strengths.

vi) Climate Change/Carbon Reduction

Objective: To reduce the carbon footprint of Stratford by 50% by 2030

See Stockholm Environmental Institute Report on reducing the footprint in York at

<http://sei-international.org/?p=publications&task=view&pid=1312>

(NB "Without Walls" who sponsored this work is the York LSP)

### c) Engagement Issues

The group which discussed engagement concentrated on the relationship between Parish Councils and the LSP. Ways to address the palpable sense of detachment from Community Forums, SDP and the county LSP were discussed at length.

Main conclusions are to value and celebrate good practice in the Parish Councils and to engage them in strategic discussions - see a) above.

Further discussions need to be held to address the very key issue of ensuring more private sector engagement in the LSP process takes place. The role of the private sector in LSPs is crucial as it offers a fresh and sometimes challenging perspective from the public and voluntary sectors. Enrolment of key employers and business groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce, has been achieved by many other LSPs and should be seen as a priority for SDP.

### d) Process issues

A detailed discussion identified many of the perceived barriers to development of SDP – none of these seem insurmountable although they do rely on officer capacity to be created through re-organisation in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

Discussions fell into the following headings:

- Role of the Core Group
- Capacity
- Core group representation on PSB
- Agenda/Priorities
- Communications Strategy

Appendix Three itemises actions under each of these headings as well as a detailed list of other actions to be taken to improve SDP performance. At the heart of all of them, however, lies the need for dedicated officer time to be available to ensure that SDP achieves all that it is capable of for the people and places of Stratford district.

## 6) Conclusions & Recommendations

Stratford District Partnership is well structured and has clear governance arrangements in place. It has a clear leadership from the Chair and good engagement across all key stakeholders. Strong and positive relationships seem to exist which augurs well for the development of SDP in to the future.

Its main needs are to:

- a) Be very clear as to its position as a district LSP in the context of Warwickshire County Council, Public Service Board and Local Area Agreement as well not being detached from the Community Forums, Parish Councils and other partnership groups, especially those in the private sector.

Included in this is to ensure that action planning and performance reporting resonate through all levels of the LSPs process in a clear and coherent manner.

- b) Develop the capacity of officers to realise the ambitions of the LSP. Dedicated resources must be provided through the agreement with all the partners. How this might be achieved needs to be agreed by partners on the Core Group.
- c) Agree a finite set of strategic issues to be addressed by the Core Group and then establish the responsibility for driving forward the action planning process. Clear evidence of agreement around what the key needs are exists in the Core Group – translating that understanding into action and the delivery of change is the next stage.

## Appendix One

### Presentation Slides

#### Slide 1

Stratford District Partnership Development  
Steve Rose  
14 April 2010

#### Slide 2

##### Aims of Workshop

- To build stronger relationships between partners and greater buy in from themed groups
- To create a clearer focus about the role of the LSP Core Group within the wider structure
- To engender a commitment to managing performance of the partnership

##### Outcomes

- A clear set of action-based objectives for the Partnership to address within the context of two-tier working and relationship to the Warwickshire Public Service Board
- A clearer understanding of the needs of each member of the Core Group and what they want from the Partnership
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#### Slide 3

##### Programme

10.00 Introduction & Ground Rules

10.10 What Are We Doing Here?

10.30 LSPs – a brief overview

10.45 Results of LSP Conference – 22 March 2010

- Asking the “right” questions for the area – where if not the LSP?
- Issues to address

10.55 Break

11.10 Group Discussions

- Tangible Issues
- Development & Engagement
- Process issues

12.15 Agreeing LSP objectives

12.45 Feedback

#### Slide 4

##### Introduction and Ground Rules

- The Facilitator

- Ground Rules
  - Respect
  - Energy
  - Honesty
  - Commitment to future
  - Generosity
  - Equality

#### Slide 5

What are we doing here?

- Reasons why your organisation is on Stratford Partnership
- Thing that you find most useful/enjoyable about Stratford Partnership (in your job or personally)
- Things that you are not getting from Stratford Partnership

#### Slide 6

LSPs – a quick overview

- Obligation to some – Duty-to-Cooperate
- Value Added – not telling agencies how to do their job
- Relationship management – at the right level from senior to general public
- Shared vision and ownership of outcomes
- Clear objectives (relationship to WCC & PSB)

#### Slide 7

LSPs – a quick overview

- Resource identification & allocation – not only ABGs!
- Delivery of change
- Measuring & Reporting Performance – action plans are harmonious with WCC & PSB
- Structures & Process including WCC and PSB
- Officer Capacity

#### Slide 8

Asking the “right” questions for the area

Where if not the LSP?

- “What does World Class Stratford look like?”
- “How can we develop a greater sense of pride in Stratford?”
- “How can Stratford be more affordable for young families?”
- “Where do we meet, discuss and celebrate as a community?”  
 (“Best of Awards” or “Festival of Ideas”)
- “What would it take to become the healthiest place in the UK?”
- “Are the voices of young people being heard?”
- “Where is Shakespeare in the Partnership?”
- .....and then..... “What does the data tell us?”

### Slide 9

Conference Issues to Address

1) Tangible Strategic Issues:

- Generating more inward investment
- Improving access to services in rural communities
- Harnessing partners to tackle issues around affordable housing
- Tackle fuel poverty
- Improve access to public transport and how all providers work together
- Others?

### Slide 10

Conference Issues to Address

2) Development & Engagement:

- Changing concept and role of the Fire Service
- Improving use of Parish Councils
- Build potential of community forums – resources and chairs
- Tap in to commercial sector
- Others?

### Slide 11

Conference Issues to Address

3) Process Issues:

- Role of Core Group
  - Links to WCC LSP and PSB
  - Agenda and Priority Setting – who does it?
  - Resource Allocation – not just £££
  - Strategic performance management – shared and understood
  - Communications strategy
- Officer support
  - Capacity
  - Reports
  - Maintaining performance management
- (Structures)

### Slide 12

Conference Issues to Address

4) General aspirations:

- Don't reinvent the wheel
- Learn from what works and roll out in other areas
- Others?

### Slide 13

Workshop Session

In Groups:

- 1) Tangible Issues

- 2) Development & Engagement
- 3) Process
  - What needs to be addressed?
  - Parameters – dependencies and individual agency responsibilities
  - Issues Partnership can address and how – themed groups, Core Group
  - Resource implications – money, time, people
  - What will success look like?
  - How will performance be managed and reported (at all levels)?

Slide 14

Workshop Session

- What are the priority shared objectives for Stratford District Partnership to take forward?

## Appendix Two

### Post-It Note Exercise

- Reasons why your organisation is on Stratford Partnership
  - Ensure LSPs are involved in key decisions that need to be made – full engagement
  - To make sure links are made between county and district and across all 5 LSPs
  - Improve services, learn from others
  - Build relationships on an individual level
  - Provide link between Stratford Partnership and Warwickshire CC at a strategic level
  - The opportunity to meet and work with colleagues from partner organisations
  - Joined-up working in terms of the delivery of the LAA
  - Partnership working can/should provide added value and better community outcomes
  - The Council can't achieve any of its priority outcomes by working on its own
  - Raising the profile of local issues that need joint agency/organisation approaches to address
  - To develop networks and partnerships to enable smooth working
  - VASA is the voice of the Third Sector and provides a wide overview of vol/com issues – ensures vol/com sector is a core partner in the LSP
  - We have to be
  - We want to be
  - Share resources
  - Improve efficiency and effectiveness
  - Outcomes for the community
  - Synergy of partnership working
  - Reduced budgets :key driver – value for money
  - SDC – statutory
  - Representing Parish & Town Councils which should be an integral part of the Partnership
  - To contribute to the planning for the health of Stratford District
  - WCC – because we are one of the main partners helping to drive the Partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of Stratford residents
  - Benchmarking with other areas
  - Making things better for the taxpayer
  - As a catalyst between county and community forums
  - Influence the services for older people in the district
  - Meet other partners
  - Partnerships are part of my role
  - Improve quality of life for Stratford residents
  - Key player in local Children, Young People and Family issues
  - Partnerships are important for SDC to understand the work of each organisation. Without partnerships we cannot deliver a complete service to all residents and businesses

- Thing that you find most useful/enjoyable about Stratford Partnership (in your job or personally)
  - Enjoy meeting the different people
  - Seeing the evidence with improved services or good news stories at the local level and for local people
  - The partnership is friendly and constructive
  - Working with committed people
  - Useful networking
  - Keeping Health on the agenda
  - Avoid duplication of effort and recognise joined-up working
  - It's an integral part of the LSP and is committed to the process of improvement
  - Its potential to make a difference (£4bn of public money in the District)
  - Able to hear a cross-section of views and able to influence policy and strategy
  - Networking – getting to meet other agencies and hear/share issues – perhaps even for common solution
  - Making a contribution to the “Community”
  - As a significant public service provider, the opportunity to make a difference
  - Networking
  - Benefits to the community is the key
  - Commitment/shared agenda
  - Meeting/talking/generating ideas
  - Networking
  
- Things that you are not getting from Stratford Partnership
  - We are unable to “stand still” long enough to see where we are going
  - The added value of the LSP
  - The complexity of the reporting lines/reports/actions
  - Clear sense re: role of the Core Group
  - Clear sense of efficiency/value being achieved
  - The bespoke resources available to the LSP are very limited and the squeeze is on
  - No conclusions – too much talk, not enough action
  - Health seems to have a negative reputation in Stratford District
  - Not Partnership commitments to share resources, share objectives & outcomes, common joint plan or drive to deliver joint outcomes
  - The feeling that we are not achieving clear objectives
  - Some of the big issues and major projects are not “plugged in”
  - We rarely fall out – which maybe means we shy away from some of the hard stuff. Would like to see better/more effective links with LSP/PSB
  - Visible results
  - Specifics i.e. outcomes to be achieved and whether their potential is being fulfilled. No measurable outcomes yet
  - No clear objectives of how the LSP is to achieve progress

## Appendix Three

### Workshop Notes

#### 1) "Strategic Issues" Group

- a) General points to address
  - Joined-up performance management across the whole partnership – report only once!
  - Clarity and purpose of role
  - How do we create some joint officer capacity?
  - Agendas – move from receiving reports to asking questions

#### b) Issues

##### Fuel Poverty

- Health, lack of disposable income, carbon footprint

##### Access to Services

- Community support to enable face to face contact. Automation/access channels.
- Promoting active communities/community development has links to community transport, vibrant town and parish plans, volunteering, supporting independent living

##### Encourage Economic Growth

- Conference market/effective promotion of tourism/festivals
- Promoting local businesses – local sourcing/procurement
- Market Town development
- Skills and training

##### Create Balanced Communities

- Affordable housing
- Demographics
- Activities for young people/families
- Managing new development

##### Climate Change/Carbon Reduction –

- Is this an issue for us?

#### 2) Development & Engagement Group

- Engage Parish Councils by inviting them to have a more leading role in Community Forums
- Concentrate on the proactive and successful forums to show what can be achieved
- Ask Parish Councils if there are any issues they would like included in the agenda
- Award to the most engaged Parish Council
- Roadshow to publicise
- Grants

- Single generic issues
- Address the fears of smaller Parish Councils
- Celebrate success

### 3) Process Issues

#### Role of the Core Group

- Links 3 way
- Community Forum reps: capacity building/clarity of roles
- Strategic themes to be fed to relevant agency

#### Capacity –

- Need staffing – 4 other LSPs have dedicated teams
- Use existing resources differently
- Merge area team/community team
- Performance management of LSP intrinsic to CAA process

Core group representation on PSB

#### Agenda/Priorities

- Aligned/fairly comfortable
- Economic activity is weak
- CAA will focus on a) Economy b) District LSPs making a difference
- Need piece of work to identify impact of budget cuts/efficiencies on all partners

#### Communications Strategy

- Levels of communication right
- Internal is priority
- Slot at each meeting for each partner to present hot issues/pressures and opportunities
- Bev's newsletter - review distribution list/social marketing

#### Actions & Issues to be addressed

- Clarity of roles
- Clarity of communication channels
- Map existing picture – Karin
- Need to develop trust/genuine partnership commitment at PSB/LSP/ CF levels
- Identify new SDC Leader and engage in LSP/PSB agenda
- Civic Leaderships/culture
- Need private sector representation on Core Group – Theatre? BID Tourism? Chamber of Commerce?
- Identify impact of budget cuts over next five years for all partners
- Theme Group leads – work to monitor/coordinate progress and report to Core Group
- Benchmark performance of LSP based on PSB intelligence – help to disaggregate targets
- Year end performance date item on next agenda – Louise
- Resource allocation (it's not what you can get, it's what you can give) – budget cycles need aligning. 3year medium term planning – recognise political cycle
- Need to be aware of officer/elected member roles and differences between them