

## **LOCALITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP (LAP) REVIEW**

**Submitted by:** Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships – Mark Bailey

**Portfolio:** Safer and Stronger Communities

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### **Purpose of the Report**

This report contains information and proposals relating to the Newcastle Partnership and Borough council review of Locality Action Partnerships. The full partnership report (Appendix A) outlines the background to the establishment of the LAPs; the progress made to date and identifies a set of options for future development. This report aims to gain support for the recommendations made and the ongoing development of Locality Action Partnerships

### **Recommendations**

- (a) Cabinet to note the contents of the report and the full Newcastle Partnership Locality Action Partnership Review report The Story of ‘Our Place’**
- (b) Cabinet to agree the recommendations of the full report and the proposals contained in this report.**
- (c) Cabinet to identify opportunities within their portfolio area for links to be made with Locality Action Partnerships.**
- (d) Cabinet to suggest proposals or recommendations relating to strengthening the role of the elected member.**
- (e) Cabinet to note the comments made by the Active & Cohesive Scrutiny Committee on 22 August 2011 and follow up these comments as required**

### **Reasons**

In September 2007, the Council adopted locality working as an approach to strengthen the connection between the work of the council, its councillors, its partners, and individual communities. Eleven individual localities have since been established and are at various stages of development. Locality working has been reviewed on a number of occasions since 2007. The review is part of the wider Borough Council transformation project. The proposals contained in this report aim to further develop Locality Action Partnerships and to firmly establish them as a structure for the emerging localism agenda.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 In September 2007 the Cabinet supported proposals to develop closer community working arrangements and connections through the development of locality working arrangements.
- 1.2 At the Cabinet meeting on 20 February 2008, Cabinet agreed proposals to strengthen the community leadership role of elected members with a view to that work assisting the development of Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs). Those proposals were to be considered by a cross party working group under the guidance of the Active & Cohesive Communities Scrutiny Committee. This work has not been completed and no recommendations have yet been made.

- 1.3 In October 2008, the Newcastle Partnership identified that to enable service providers to focus their efforts more closely on the varying needs of different communities that a new way of working would need to be developed. The partnership recognised its crucial role in bringing agencies and communities together to improve the local area and to ensure that decision making reflects the priorities of both, balanced with evidence based need and therefore established LAPs.
- 1.4 LAPs emerged from the previous Community Safety Locality Action Groups and utilised the principles of Neighbourhood Management (following on from the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder). In addition they assisted in the delivery of the 2006 local government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' which set out the 'government's vision to create strong, prosperous communities and reshape public services around those who use them, through greater partnership working between local authorities and other agencies' (Local Government White Paper; Strong and Prosperous Communities, 2006, Department for Communities and Local Government, Crown Copyright 2006).
- 1.5 Recognition was given to the transferable practice from the NMP to the LAPs in a 2009 REGEN West Midlands prize where Newcastle was highly commended.
- 1.6 LAPs were set up to assist in providing effective joint working within localities, to enable more decisions to be made at a local level with the involvement of the residents and the communities that they affect. As a result, the LAPs were set the task of widening their remit to focus on different themes to meet the priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 1.7 LAPs in Newcastle were supported and administered on behalf of the key partners and the community itself by a Locality Working Team (based in the Borough Council) up until February 2010, when a decision was made to review this support, resulting in the team being withdrawn from the service.
- 1.8 It was further determined by the Borough Council, in conjunction with partners, that LAPs and locality working be identified as one of the areas of work for the Newcastle Borough Council Transformation Programme in February 2010. Details of the processes underpinning the LAP review and those agencies, groups and individuals involved in the review can be found in the methodology sections connected to the full Newcastle Partnership report (see partnership report Appendices one and two)
- 1.9 Following on from this initial decision, in November 2010 the project manager for the LAPs project was identified as the Newcastle LSP Manager (who was, at the time, in the process of overseeing and developing a review of the Newcastle Partnership structures and governance arrangements). In December 2010, the Newcastle Partnership Executive Board agreed to the proposed Borough Partnership structure (see Appendix three of the full partnership report).
- 1.10 Since the new Partnership structure was agreed, progress has been made on the LAPs project. The LSP Manager (now called the Partnerships Manager) has completed a mapping exercise on the LAPs, looking at how each of them operates; which partners attend and at what level of the organisation attendees work at; the chairs and the role of the chairs; when and where the groups meet; and has also sought to identify the key issues for those people involved in the LAPs.
- 1.11 The review has involved a large number of people many of whom have similar ideas as to how the LAPs should progress, although there have been a number of proposals put forward that are the opinion of only a small number of those involved. It should be stated that some of the suggestions received may not be achievable either due to reductions in capacity

and/or insufficient resources. In addition, there remains a number of national reforms that are still to be established and clarified that may impact on the future development of locality working and therefore the LAPs may need to remain under constant review over the next 12-18 months.

- 1.12 The final report (Appendix A) details the information gathered and presents suggestions for future development. The Newcastle Partnership report has been presented to the Executive Management Team, Partnership Delivery Group, Locality Action Partnership chairs and to the Partnership Executive Board.

## 2. Issues

- 2.1 Nationally, locality working has been developed in different ways with the key aim of transferring some aspects of control currently exercised by local authorities and other public sector organisations to local communities and thereby effectively acknowledging the concept that 'one size doesn't fit all'. In Newcastle-under-Lyme, LAPs were initiated to give local people and communities more influence over how to improve their lives and a role in decision making and policy formulation, development and implementation. In addition, LAPs can assist in community engagement and empowerment and can play a major part in the achievement of improved community cohesion.
- 2.2 There are significant new drivers that underpin the future development of locality working. The Coalition Government's 'Programme for Government' outlines support for progress to be made by "people coming together to make life better and for distributing power and opportunity", (The Coalition; Our Programme for Government, <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/coalition-documents>). In addition the 'Big Society, Not Big Government' document discusses the plan to 'stimulate the creation and development of neighbourhood groups in every area' (Big Society, Not Big Government [http://www.conservatives.com/News/News\\_stories/2010/03/Plans\\_announced\\_to\\_help\\_build\\_a\\_Big\\_Society.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/News/News_stories/2010/03/Plans_announced_to_help_build_a_Big_Society.aspx)).
- 2.3 The Newcastle Partnership has already made significant steps in the direction outlined above and the continued support for and development of the LAPs will move the Borough towards ensuring delivery against these national objectives and local priorities.
- 2.4 The review highlighted support for LAPs to continue with a number of suggestions made to ensure their ongoing development.
- 2.5 The Partnership Delivery Group meeting of 23 May 2011 confirmed the ongoing commitment to the development of LAPs.
- 2.6 The partnership review generated a wide acceptance that the LAPs are a good structure for the emerging agendas of Big Society and the Localism and Decentralisation Bill.
- 2.7 The Partnership report tables a number of recommendations to develop Locality Action Partnerships. The recommendations have been split into a number of smaller key subject areas:
  - (i) **Resources** – chairs, resident/community involvement, partners, councillors
  - (ii) **Communication** – Partner Communications, Social Media, Website, Newsletter.
  - (iii) **Community Pride** – Structured approach to Community Pride.
  - (iv) **Funding** – Current, Future, Applications, External funding, LAP support
  - (v) **General Function** – Definition, Constitution, Terms of Reference, Roles and Responsibilities, Action Planning, Governance, Branding, Community Engagement.

- 2.8 The issues of strengthening the community leadership role of elected members have been highlighted in previous committee reports and again have been raised during the LAP review. There are specific elected member development recommendations in the report which aim to address this issue.
- 2.9 Two of the areas consistently raised as highly important throughout the review are the support delivered by the current LAP Administration Assistant and the availability of LAP funding for small projects.
- 2.10 Of particular importance to Newcastle Borough Council, is the communication and links between individual departments of the council and Locality Action Partnerships. A mapping exercise by Heads of Service will assist in establishing a plan of action to engage officers of the borough council in the development of LAPs.
- 2.11 Further practical considerations include the following: -
- (i) There are a number of government policy and legislative changes yet to be finalised and implemented which will have an impact on the future development of Locality Action Partnerships;
  - (ii) There remain significant organisational reforms and restructures ongoing across the borough and county resulting in a reduction in capacity of the constituent public sector organisations involved;
  - (iii) Due to the number of people involved, there are a large number of opinions and suggestions to consider;
  - (iv) Increased financial constraints will play a key part;
  - (v) One size doesn't fit all – each locality has different personalities involved, local priorities and have developed at varying stages;
  - (vi) Community involvement – consideration needs to be given as to whether issues raised are for personal purposes or are more representative of the wider community; and
  - (vii) There is a tendency for communities to raise priorities on issues that are witnessed on a daily basis such as littering and dog fouling and generally do not consider wider issues such as health, employment and financial inclusion
- 2.12 Review of LAPs has been included on the Work Programme for 2011-12 of the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Borough Council.
- 2.13 In light of this inclusion, the Scrutiny Committee considered 'The Story of Our Place' report at its meeting of 22 August 2011, as well as a covering report. In response the Committee raised a number of issues including: -
- Concerns about the future funding of the LAPs and the level of commitment from public sector organisations
  - Developing more effective links with Parish Councils and considering the respective roles of the LAPs and Parishes
  - How LAP meetings are recorded and how issues are communicated to the wider world
- 2.14 In considering the report and the review overall, the Active & Cohesive Communities Committee requested more time to go through the issues contained in the various documents and asked that Cabinet note this and allows more consideration to be made of the review process.

### 3. **Options Considered**

#### 3.1 **Option A – no change**

- (i) This option will not strengthen or develop the service delivery link to LAPs

#### 3.2 **Option B – Agree to the proposals contained in this report and the LAP Review**

- (i) Attached to this option is the caveat that future policy and legislation may have a direct impact on the development of LAPs.
- (ii) This option will assist in strengthening the community leadership role of elected members.
- (iii) Option B will ensure a level of consistency to the LAPs, however is flexible enough to allow the locality concept that 'one size doesn't fit all'.
- (iv) Finally this option will strengthen and develop the LAPs to be in an improved position to delivery elements of Big Society and the proposed Localism and Decentralisation Bill due to be enacted in November 2010.

### 4. **Proposal**

4.1 It is proposed that Informal Cabinet agree to the recommendations in this and the Newcastle Partnership Locality Action Partnership review report.

4.2 It is also proposed that Informal Cabinet make note of the recommendations relating to the role of the elected member and any specific proposals that may be relevant to their portfolio area.

### 5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 Locality Working has operated in different guises over a number of years and LAPs have been under various review processes since 2007. The current review links into developing policy, strategy and legislation and therefore the recommendations are integral to the ongoing development of LAPs, to ensure delivery against the emerging agendas. Additionally, LAPs are part of the transformation programme and as such have already been highlighted for development.

5.2 The recommendations have been identified through detailed consultation with partners, LAP chairs, elected members and the community and attempt to meet a broad range of requirements.

### 6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

6.1 Locality Action Partnerships were initially developed to deliver local solutions to both Corporate and Sustainable Community Strategy priorities. It is proposed that the LAPs continue to focus on local priorities and deliver against the local Sustainable Community Strategy priorities.

### 7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 None at present although the review has established a widely acknowledged opinion that LAPs are a good structure for the emerging agenda. There may be future implications based around the proposed Localism and Decentralisation Bill and other statutory duties.

## 8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment of the review has been completed and is available. The review has not raised any specific issues relating to equality, however, the recommendations in the partnership report have areas of work that have potential relevance to equality and they will be identified and impact assessed.

## 9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 Locality Action Partnerships were allocated £5,000 each to develop local solutions to issues with the community. Funding was identified as a priority area as part of the review and therefore will need consideration. A separate paper relating to this issue is being submitted by the Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships.
- 9.2 The review has a number of recommendations that require officer time both from the Business Improvement and Partnerships team and other departments across the borough council. Current administration support to the LAPs is provided by a LAP Administration Assistant who's Fixed Term Contract is due to end in March 2012. This is currently being investigated by the Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships and therefore may be a future decision item.

## 10. **Major Risks**

- 10.1 The GRACE risk assessment for Locality Action Partnerships is currently being reviewed and is being linked with the wider Newcastle Partnership risks. Two areas of potential future risk are the emerging gaps in Big Society and the delivery against the proposed Localism and Decentralisation Bill.

## 11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

- 11.1 As one of the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities, where possible issues are identified by individual Locality Action Partnerships relating to sustainability and climate change and the work is subsequently linked to the Newcastle Partnership Sustainable Development group.

## 12. **Key Decision Information**

- 12.1 This item is included in the forward plan.

## 13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

5 Sept 2007 – Partnership & Neighbourhood Working  
20 February 2008 – Ward Councillors and community leadership  
17 February 2010 – Developing Locality Working

## 14. **List of Appendices**

- 14.1 Appendix A – Full Newcastle Partnership Locality Action Partnership Review – 'The Story of our place' including: Appendix One – Methodology, Appendix Two – List of interviewees and attendees at LAP Review, Appendix Three – Newcastle Partnership Structure, Appendix Four – LAP Review Transformation Programme Action Plan, Appendix Five – Generic Terms of Reference, Appendix Six – Individual LAP Details – Attendees, Projects, Chair and Appendix Seven – Feedback from Two Review Sessions