



Report of the Chief Officer (Executive Support) and the Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing

Executive Board

Date: 20 September 2006

Subject: Leeds Initiative; District Partnerships; and Local Area Agreement Update

Electoral Wards Affected:

All

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community and Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report seeks to provide members of the Executive Board with a progress report on the Leeds Initiative, including the work of the district partnerships and the city's Local Area Agreement. In addition, it sets out new local and national challenges that will need to be addressed over the next twelve months. Importantly, it also seeks to promote improved understanding and engagement of Elected Members in the work of the partnership.
2. The Leeds Initiative is formally accredited as the local strategic partnership (LSP) for the Leeds local authority district. This accreditation is directly related to the city's allocation of neighbourhood renewal funds, which by 2008 will have brought with it £55m investment into the city's most deprived neighbourhoods. Members will recall approving the 2006/07 programme at its meeting in April 2006.
3. To achieve formal accreditation as the city's LSP, the Leeds Initiative must demonstrate compliance with Government's assessment criteria including:
 - developing and agreeing a sustainable community strategy for the city (Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020);
 - agreeing a neighbourhood renewal strategy (Leeds Regeneration Plan 2005 to 2008);

- developing a Local Area Agreement setting out priorities and negotiating local freedoms and flexibilities with central Government;
 - making sure that the Leeds Initiative and its family of partnerships work towards best practice criteria – to be strategic; inclusive; action-focused; performance-managed; efficient; and a learning organisation; and
 - engaging stakeholders, communities and elected representatives in all aspects of the work of the partnership.
4. Over the next year, there will be a need for the partnership to evolve to respond to new challenges nationally and locally including:
- responding to the Government’s anticipated white paper on local government expected in Autumn 2006 – informed by the Audit Commissions 2005 report “bridging the accountability gap”, which contains a number of key issues for the consideration of LSPs as they go forward (some of these are described in section 6 of this report);
 - supporting local developments relative to strategy, development and new forms of governance needed to support the changing role of children and adult services and in the light of the council’s continuous change agenda;
 - further shaping the structures and governance arrangements needed to deliver the city’s Local Area Agreement;
 - maintaining a high-performing LSP in the light of more challenging criteria; and
 - making sure that the Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020 and the Leeds Regeneration Plan 2005 to 2008 are delivered and where appropriate reviewed and refreshed over time

1.0 Purpose of the report

1.1 As Leeds City Council is the lead and accountable partner in the LSP, this report seeks the agreement of the Executive Board:

- that the partnership is adequately fulfilling its obligations as the city's formally accredited LSP;
- to receive six-monthly reports on key Leeds Initiative issues so that Elected Members are more closely engaged in the work of the partnership; and
- to note the future direction of travel for the partnership in responding to new national and local developments.

1.2 The report is divided into three sections that, taken together, provide details of progress against the LSP criteria outlined above. These are:

The corporate work of the Leeds Initiative - including the development of the Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020, LSP accreditation and the engagement of Elected Members (section 3 of the report).

District partnerships - incorporating the Leeds Regeneration Plan 2005 to 2008, its priorities, progress and emerging issues (section 4 of the report).

The Local Area Agreement - its purpose and role, secondary objectives and governance arrangements (section 5 of the report).

1.3 And finally, as part of the discussions that are leading up to the publication of the anticipated local government white paper expected in Autumn 2006, the report raises some key issues that might require new ways of working particularly around issues such as corporate governance, performance management, joint accountability arrangements and multi-agency delivery.

1.4 This final section of the report seeks to demonstrate how partnership thinking needs to change in the light of new developments relative to children and adult services and the council's continuous change agenda which is focused on the potential for commissioning and delivering services in new ways. Sections 6 and 7 concentrate on this agenda, and section 9 draws together overall conclusions.

1.5 Executive Board members are encouraged to treat some sections of this report as a basis for discussion and consideration and note that others make recommendations for specific approvals.

1.6 The report is by no means a fully comprehensive account of all of the work of the Leeds Initiative, given the wide-ranging nature of activities. It does, however, cover the most important issues affecting the partnership at this time.

2.0 Background information

2.1 The Leeds Initiative is the city's principal partnership. It draws together public, private, voluntary, community and faith sectors to develop and deliver the Vision for Leeds - the city's community strategy. Led by the council, the Leeds Initiative aims to promote the economic, environmental, social and cultural wellbeing of the city and its many communities. The Local Government Act 2000 sets out a requirement that local

authorities should work with their partners to develop a community strategy in order that they can discharge their powers of wellbeing. The Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020 and its sub-plans provide such a vehicle.

- 2.2 Established in 1990, the Leeds Initiative is one of the most mature and effective partnerships of its nature, recognised by Government and other local authorities as a trailblazer. It predates the Government's LSP initiative by twelve years and has a much broader and more comprehensive remit about the whole life of the city. The Leeds Initiative is also formally accredited by Government as the LSP for the Leeds district. Through the annual assessment process, the Initiative has been awarded 'green' for three years running against the traffic-light scoring system. The Government's agenda for LSPs remains firmly focused on tackling the issues of multiple deprivation in the country's most disadvantaged areas according to the index of multiple deprivation. Accreditation is a requirement to access the neighbourhood renewal fund, which will bring investment of over £55 million to the city's most deprived areas by 2007/08.
- 2.3 Whilst narrowing the gap remains a vital component of the work of the Leeds Initiative, it is important to reiterate that its role also spans a much wider set of issues – in fact, all issues facing the city set out within the aims, themes and priorities of the Vision for Leeds.
- 2.4 Over the years, the Leeds Initiative has gone through several evolutions to make sure that it reflects the changing local, regional, national and international environments. It has provided a means of galvanizing the city's stakeholders and communities together behind shared goals and objectives. It provides a united position for the city's ambitions which has assisted in growing confidence, encouraging investment from both private and public sectors, and has provided a common framework through which to promote the city.

3.0 Corporate work of the Leeds Initiative

3.1 Vision for Leeds

3.1.1 The Local Government Act 2000 included the power for local authorities to work with partners and communities to develop a community strategy. Community strategies aim to improve quality of life and contribute to achieving lasting and sustainable change. These are long-term inspirational plans grounded in shorter-term actions and activities and provide the means by which partners and communities can have a stake in their local areas.

3.1.2 The Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020 was approved by Leeds City Council and the Leeds Initiative Board in April 2004 and launched in July 2004. The City's overall vision is as follows:

“Our Vision for Leeds is an internationally competitive European city at the heart of a prosperous region where everyone can enjoy a high quality of life.”

3.1.3 It further sets out three main aims, against which progress must be made if the Vision is to be delivered. These are:

- **going up a league as a city;**
- **narrowing the gap; and**

- **developing Leeds' role as the regional capital.**

3.1.4 The Vision also contains eight strategic themes covering culture, economy, learning, transport, environment, thriving places, health and wellbeing and harmonious communities, as well as twelve priority projects.

3.1.5 Since the launch of the Vision, the Leeds Initiative has undergone a restructure to make sure that it is fit for the purpose to deliver the Vision. It has established:

- two new executives – the Narrowing the Gap and Going up a League executives;
- a new strategy group for health and wellbeing; and
- a developing harmonious communities network.

3.1.6 It has absorbed the new Children Leeds partnership within the structure and carried out a major review of its effectiveness and role relative to the developing children's trust arrangements.

3.1.7 Task groups have been formed and have provided leadership to specific projects including:

- Olympics 2012;
- City Image
- cultural facilities; and
- the 'cleanest city', among others.

And importantly, we have established five district partnerships to deliver the Vision for Leeds in local areas through the Leeds Regeneration Plan 2005 to 2008.

3.1.8 Progress against the Vision for Leeds priorities is monitored regularly and there are specific measures and indicators which set out how the city performs in relation to the strategic themes identified above.

3.2 LSP accreditation and NRF

3.2.1 A positive LSP accreditation is required to access resources from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. A summary of key comments by Government Office as part of the last accreditation process are available on request. Members of the Executive Board will recall approving the 2006/07 programme at its meeting in April 2006.

3.2.2 In the current financial year the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is bringing £12.8m investment into the city's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Leeds' indicative allocation for 2007/08 is £14.9m (dependant upon LSP re-accreditation which takes place in November 2006).

3.2.3 Since April 2006, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund has been 'pooled' under the Leeds local area agreement (LAA) which is now expected to be a major tool in delivering neighbourhood renewal.

3.3 Partnership working and the council's standing

3.3.1 Leeds City Council is the primary funder and lead partner of the Leeds Initiative. The Board is chaired by Councilor Mark Harris and also has representatives from the

main political parties. The Chair shapes the agenda for the Leeds Initiative Board, advised by the deputy chairs, the council's chief executive, the director of the Leeds Initiative, and the chairs of the two executives. Partners engaged in the Leeds Initiative remain accountable to their own organisations for decisions and actions, but their engagement allows for greater influence over the decisions of others and in reaching consensus and commonly agreed objectives across the city

- 3.3.2 The Narrowing the Gap and Going up a League Executives include Elected Members nominated by the council's leadership. They provide a direct connection to the democratic frameworks and provide guidance and support to the partnership's work.
- 3.3.3 Other Elected Members play an active role in chairing and participating on many of its other groups, including all the strategy groups and the district partnerships.
- 3.3.4 The effectiveness of partnership working has increasingly formed part of the assessment criteria of local government inspection regimes including the comprehensive performance assessment and a range of other inspections such as OfSTED. The relevant comments from the most recent key inspection reports are available on request.

4.0 District Partnerships

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 The Leeds Initiative and the council's Executive Board agreed to establish five district partnerships in October 2003. District partnerships have developed in parallel to the council's Area Committees and the Area Management arrangements. The five district partnerships were established in autumn 2004. Whilst there are regular reports on Area Committee agendas about district partnership matters this report does propose that all District Partnerships should report on a quarterly basis to each of their respective area committees.
- 4.1.2 The Leeds Initiative formally launched the Leeds Regeneration Plan 2005 to 2008 in November 2005 following approval of the Executive Board. The Leeds Regeneration Plan represents the city's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and forms a key component of the Government's accreditation for LSPs. Its primary objective is to deliver the narrowing the gap agenda of the Vision for Leeds. It is made up of one city-wide action plan and five district action plans, which form the framework for action for the five district partnerships.
- 4.1.3 All five district partnerships have established similar partnership structures. These include a decision-making board or executive representing the public, private and the voluntary, community and faith sectors which meet, on average, five times a year. All the partnerships have focused task groups that take forward specific activities, and all have a district conference at least once a year which draws together all strands of community representation and other local stakeholders. In most cases, a small group of officers from district partnership organisations have the responsibility for taking forward actions from board and executive meetings. Partners engaged in district partnerships remain accountable to their own organisations but are able to apply influence on the decisions of others and in joint activity

4.2 Membership of the Partnerships

4.2.1 Membership of each district partnership reflects the key issues in each area. In summary:

- public sector representation on all five partnerships includes ALMOs, Education Leeds, Primary Care Trusts, Jobcentre Plus and Leeds City Council (Social Services and Area Management), there are representatives from higher education on three of the partnerships and West Yorkshire Police on two;
- links to Area Committees are ensured through the inner and outer area committee chairs being members of the district partnership alongside area managers;
- the voluntary, community and faith sector are represented through Leeds Voice and from local voluntary and community sector forums; and
- three of the five partnerships have private sector representation and representatives are in the process of being recruited in the other areas.

4.3 Delivering Priorities

The District Action Plans set out the priorities for action locally across the 8 Vision themes. These plans reported in detail to the Executive Board in September 2005. Copies of the review reports can be made available on request. Progress against these priorities actions are tracked and reported on a quarterly basis to the Narrowing the Gap Executive and the district partnerships.

4.4 Issues to address

4.4.1 At the last meeting of the Area Committee chairs, progress on district partnerships arrangements was considered. Overall the view was that district partnerships were working effectively and making progress. There were good examples of partnership activity but concerns about the contribution and involvement of some partners. Particularly, there were issues raised about future PCT input in some areas and forthcoming changes in the health sector, ALMOs and the police. Work remains ongoing to address these issues.

4.4.2 In relation to the workload of the partnerships, it was acknowledged that there was some necessary targeting of work in inner areas but also a degree of concern that some issues in outer areas were not getting onto the agenda or receiving appropriate consideration. It was suggested that further work should be done to look at the balance of workload in more detail and consider if any alternative approaches may be required for particular issues.

5.0 Local Area Agreement

5.1 Purpose and role

5.1.1 Leeds' local area agreement (LAA) is a three-year agreement between the local authority and key partners with central government. Leeds' LAA was formally signed on 23 March 2006 and implementation commenced immediately. LAAs will

be in place for all upper-tier authorities in England by March 2007 and are perceived as the cornerstone of a new relationship between local and central government.

5.1.2 The primary objective of LAAs is to work together in a new way to achieve shared outcomes that make a difference to people's lives and localities. Leeds' LAA has focused on issues that impact most on the quality of life for individuals, families and communities in the city, primarily, but not exclusively, in areas with the highest levels of deprivation. The Vision for Leeds and the Leeds Regeneration Plan provide the evidence and priority base for the agreement and it builds on these aspirations by:

- accelerating delivery of key priorities and programmes of change in these plans and strategies; and
- developing multi-agency work to deliver more lasting changes where individuals, families and communities face particular obstacles that prevent them from living lives that are happy, healthy, safe, successful and free from poverty.

5.1.3 Secondary objectives include the following.

- **A better use of public money to solve problems.**
Funding streams to local areas can be 'pooled' in the agreement and used to meet the agreed set of priorities. Currently, Leeds is 'pooling' Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, Community Empowerment Network and elements of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund under the agreement. A further twenty-three funding streams will automatically be pooled under the agreement in 07/08. The funding associated with achieving 'stretch targets' (LPSA2) is also integrated into the agreement. This provides for £1.5 million of pump-priming monies being available to support delivery of our LPSA2 targets for which there is up to £20.8 million reward for the city in 2008/9 should targets be met.
- **Strengthening partnership delivery.**
All partners to the agreement are individually responsible for the delivery of outcomes or targets that they agree to deliver as part of the four blocks of the agreement - Children and Young People, Safer and Stronger Communities, Healthier Communities and Older People, and Economic Development and Enterprise. In Leeds, partners are jointly planning service delivery and developing a unified approach to arrangements for performance management across public services in Leeds. Voluntary, community and faith sector representatives are fully involved in this process. Additionally, Leeds has been successful in achieving six enabling measures (previously known as freedoms and flexibilities) from government departments to remove barriers to joint delivery of outcomes.
- **A framework within which local authorities can enhance their community leadership role.**
Both the LSP and the local authority have key roles to play in ensuring that our local area agreement is effective. The LSP is responsible for the overarching development and delivery of the LAA and the local authority is the accountable body for the financial management of the LAA, assigning partners for each of the targets in the LAA and ensuring that robust performance management arrangements are in place. The Leeds Initiative Board / Executive, the Council's Executive Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will all help to ensure that cross-cutting themes are implemented through the LAA. In Leeds,

elected members are effectively positioned through their roles in Area Committees, district partnerships and scrutiny, to lead, influence and enable the development of multi-agency approaches to service delivery in communities.

5.2 Governance arrangements

5.2.1 The Leeds LAA currently has a dual reporting arrangement to Leeds City Council's Executive Board and to the Leeds Initiative Board. Supplementary officer management arrangements have been established to support delivery and development of the LAA and these include:

- LAA Programme Management Board - responsible for overseeing the day-to-day implementation and delivery of the three-year agreement;
- LAA Strategy Group - responsible for the development of policy and governance of LAAs and ensuring there are strategic linkages between partners; and
- LAA Performance Management Group - responsible for the analysis and presentation of performance data assessing progress towards the outcomes of the LAA and developing an integrated approach to performance management across public sector partners.

5.2.2 Whilst Members of Executive Board are ultimately accountable for the LAA, Councillor Harris, in his capacity as Executive Member for Narrowing the Gap, will provide day-to-day political oversight.

6.0 Key issues

6.1. Effective partnership activity is a key criterion against which the effectiveness of the council's performance will continue to be measured. In preparing to publish the local government white paper expected in Autumn 2006, the Department for Communities and Local Government is carefully considering the future role of LSPs. As mentioned earlier, the recent Audit Commission report, 'bridging the accountability gap' has identified a number of issues for consideration. Taken together with changing local circumstances, it is clear that a review of the structures, governance, performance management and delivery arrangements will be required over the forthcoming 12 months.

6.2 Some of the key issues to consider are:

6.2.1 Governance

- The need for corporate and business plans of partner agencies to "have regard" to the community strategy. This currently only applies formally to the local authority. While the culture of the partnership means that partners do work to its aims, there is no requirement, or best practice review of partners' partnership working in the way that the council is reviewed by the Audit Commission. Such a requirement would assist in making sure that other partners are equal players in delivering action.
- The need to consider a further review of the structures of the Leeds Initiative in light of changes arising from the white paper, Local Area Agreement and other local developments within children's services, adult services and those arising from the council's continuous change programme, among others. These

developments require both hard-edged and softer partnership arrangements to secure effectiveness and wider engagement

- The need to make sure that all stakeholders and communities are engaged proactively in all aspects of the work of the LSP. In this regard, it is important that Elected Members are actively engaged demonstrating their clear remit for community leadership and their influence through their democratic mandate.

6.2.2 Performance management

- The support of partners to streamline, simplify and integrate existing performance management arrangements into an overall Leeds framework and rationalising performance monitoring and reporting at all levels.
- Leeds Initiative is subject to the ongoing accreditation regime, and it is expected that it will be more difficult to maintain the 'green' score, based on government guidance that the test will be far tougher in future assessments.

6.2.3 Delivery

- The need to use district partnerships to improve local community engagement and joined-up public services.
- The need to consider future commissioning of services by partnerships such as children's trust arrangements.
- The need to review how the voluntary and community sectors can be supported to play an active service delivery role in Leeds' partnership-based service delivery arrangements.
- The chair of Overview and Scrutiny is developing terms of reference in relation to Narrowing the Gap and how the local area agreement can add value to this key aim. All scrutiny boards are also considering the inclusion of the Local Area Agreement in their programmes.

7.0 Implications for council policy and governance

7.1 Whilst Elected Members have a clear community leadership role it is recognised that the public and stakeholders are often not able to easily understand which organisations are responsible for which public services and for improving conditions and solving problems within communities. In this regard, there is a growing expectation more generally that Elected Members ought to be in a position of strength relative to their influence on other services provided by other agencies – including police, health, transport services, further and higher education institutions, and the private sector. While the council is not directly responsible for these services - each of which have their own governance arrangements - partnership structures do provide powerful forums for influencing the policies and practices of other organisations. It is important to consider how this influence can continue to be constructively deployed.

7.2 There is an expectation that through the children's services agenda, and other budget-pooling arrangements such as through the LAA, a greater level of partnership decision-making power will emerge. Further thinking is needed to make sure that these partnerships are effective and efficient. In so doing, the council must be guided in playing its leadership role within these arrangements.

8.0 Legal and resource implications

- 8.1 Leeds Initiative is run by a small team led by the Director, and although semi-independent, is part of the wider structure of the Chief Executive's Department.
- 8.2 Work to date is based on an understanding that the main resource implications for the district partnership action plans will be met in the main through existing resources by improving and realigning mainstream services. External funding is also being sought to drive actions across some areas, including funds such as the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, National Lottery, European Funding and the West Yorkshire Sub Regional Investment Plan.
- 8.3 The LAA is being co-ordinated by a small team located in the Policy, Performance and Improvement Team in the Chief Executive's Department. It is being implemented by the contribution of officers across a range of City Council departments, the Leeds Initiative and from partners.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 LSPs provide a mechanism for local collaboration, improved public service delivery and community participation and engagement. Their role is anticipated to grow in the Government's ten-year vision for local government expected to be published in the white paper in autumn 2006. Local developments within children and adult services and through the council's continuous change programme will also bring with them the need to review the structure of the Leeds Initiative over the forthcoming 12 months to make sure it supports new ways of working. Through the Leeds Initiative, the council can demonstrate a sound base for moving its partnership work forward. The flexibility and track record of the Leeds Initiative will be helpful in this regard.
- 9.2 Elected Members are already playing a key role and will be central to enabling change to take place to ensure the most effective impact on people and localities in Leeds. Further effort is needed to ensure all members are fully briefed and feel able to understand and contribute towards the work of the Leeds Initiative.
- 9.3 Each of the district partnerships is making considerable progress with the implementation of their three-year district partnership action plans. 43% of the actions in the plans were achieved in the first year. The plans will guide the work of the district partnerships over the next two years and provide a mechanism for directing local resources.
- 9.4 The district partnerships complement the work of the council's area management arrangements and functions delegated to the Area Committees. With changes to other public sector structures, it will be important to stress the benefits of locality working and secure the ongoing commitment from other partners to develop area-based approaches to working in partnership.

10.0 Recommendations

- 10.1 It is recommended that members of the Executive Board:

- I. endorse the approach taken by the Leeds Initiative in fulfilling the Government's requirements as the city's accredited local strategic partnership;
- II. endorse the progress made by the district partnerships and in developing the city's first local area agreement;
- III. agree to the proposal for all District Partnerships to report into their respective area committees on a quarterly basis;
- IV. approve the proposal to improve the engagement of elected members in the work of the Leeds Initiative through Executive Board receiving six-monthly update reports and more regular briefings from officers;
- V. approve the proposals for reviewing the structures, governance, performance management and delivery arrangements over the next 12 months in the light of new national and local developments;
- VI. agree that the council should consider how to consolidate the support of all service areas to maximise its leadership role in the work of the Leeds Initiative and to support the delivery of the Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020; the Leeds Regeneration Plan 2005 to 2008, the local area agreement and other plans and strategies.