

# Report of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board on the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board



## Background

1. The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules state that all Scrutiny Boards will act as a “critical friend” to the relevant Strategic Partnership Board and consider and report on the following areas:
  - What contribution the Partnership Board is making to tackle poverty and inequality, and the progress being made against this
  - How successfully the Board’s partnership arrangements are working
  - To what extent are significant benefits being seen from partnership working? How has partnership working ensured increased pace of change to address the issue in hand?
2. During March 2013, the Scrutiny Boards received a report from their relevant Strategic Partnership Board setting out their strengths and potential areas for development in respect of the three key questions above. The Scrutiny Boards were also given the opportunity to question the chair, members of the Partnership Board and support officers.
4. It was agreed that, following the scrutiny sessions, each Scrutiny Board would produce a summary report of its findings. The Scrutiny Support Unit would then prepare a cover report drawing out any common threads and best practice emerging from the individual inquiry sessions. The full report will be presented to Council, as the commissioning body for this piece of scrutiny inquiry work. Each Strategic Partnership Board will also receive their respective individual report, along with the cover report, and will be requested to respond to any scrutiny recommendations in the normal manner.
5. As the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board is aligned to the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board, the following representatives from this Partnership Board had attended the Scrutiny Board’s meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013:
  - Bishop John Packer, Vice Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board (also Chair of the Leeds Migration Partnership)
  - Mike Love, Member of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board (also representing Together for Peace)
  - Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
  - Rachael Loftus, Programme Manager, Localities and Partnerships
6. This report summarises the observations and recommendations made by the Scrutiny Board during this meeting.

## The Scrutiny Board's observations and recommendations relating to the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board.

### Working collaboratively with partners

7. The Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board is made up of 15 members (11 partners and 4 politicians) and is supported by 4 Leeds City Council officers. In acknowledging that the Partnership is chaired by the Council's portfolio holder for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services, the Scrutiny Board is pleased that the Partnership is also supported by a third sector Vice-Chair.
8. In addressing the Scrutiny Board, the Vice Chair highlighted that a major strength of the Partnership Board has been its ability to bring together a range of partners within the public and voluntary and community sectors, including Elected Members, to explore opportunities for collaborative working in addressing a whole variety of issues.
9. The Partnership Board has a broad remit across community safety, community capacity, community relations, street cleaning and parks and green spaces. As such, recognition was also given to the work undertaken by its two major supporting partnerships (Safer Leeds Executive and Stronger Communities Partnership) and the other supporting partnerships that are working on specific work-streams, such as the Leeds Migration Partnership.
10. During the meeting, particular reference was made to the separate work-stream that reports directly to the Partnership Board on cleaner-greener issues. Whilst the current arrangements for cleaner-greener priorities are largely set and delivered by the Council through its statutory responsibilities and delegated functions, the Scrutiny Board supported the view of the Partnership Board that more partner involvement is needed in this area of work.

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board actively pursues the development of more partner involvement in delivering the city's cleaner-greener priorities.**

11. The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods also emphasised the need to engage more proactively with communities and the third sector in relation to the cleaner-greener agenda and also the Safer Leeds agenda.
12. With regard to the cleaner agenda in particular, historically the focus has primarily been around service delivery as oppose to trying to engage with the third sector and communities to gain a better understanding of why certain parts of the city remain very clean and yet there are areas where people persistently drop litter and encounter problems with fly-tipping. The Scrutiny Board was pleased to note that discussions around potential opportunities for promoting community involvement in the cleaner agenda had recently taken place by the Partnership Board.
13. As the city's Community Safety Partnership, the Safer Leeds Executive is statutorily required to produce a local crime and disorder strategy and therefore develops its own work programme outside the main body of the Partnership Board. However, it was reported that such work tends to focus around the actions of the relevant statutory agencies in tackling issues rather than exploring community involvement opportunities

to better understand how it feels to be in a community that is suffering from high levels of crime. It was noted that any issues discussed by the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board are addressed from a variety of different perspectives given the involvement of a wide range of partners. Whilst the Scrutiny Board acknowledges that this has proven particularly beneficial in relation to the cleaner-greener and Safer Leeds agendas, it would encourage a more proactive and direct involvement of communities and the third sector within these two particular areas of work.

### **Recommendation 2**

**That the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board ensures the involvement of communities and the third sector in the cleaner-greener and the Safer Leeds agendas.**

14. The Council's current locality working arrangements, introduced in 2011, brought about changes that were underpinned by a set of locality working design principles. Such principles relate to strong and effective governance arrangements that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of local communities. These also promote strong local leadership, with particular emphasis around engaging communities in a way that supports residents in developing local priorities, holding services to account, enabling them to do more for themselves and developing a sense of pride and belonging in their local neighbourhood.
15. Linked to such principles, the Vice Chair also highlighted a need for partners to undertake more work based on the needs of particular localities as well as maintaining a strategic overview citywide.

### **Recommendation 3**

**That the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board also undertakes work which underpins the locality working design principles and considers the needs of particular localities as well as maintaining a strategic overview citywide.**

#### Improving stronger communities working in Leeds

16. One of the Partnership's priorities within the City Priority Plan 2015 is to increase the sense of belonging that builds cohesive and harmonious communities. As such, the Scrutiny Board acknowledged that recent meetings of the Stronger Communities Partnership have focused on better understanding what is meant by 'stronger communities' and identifying the conditions required to build on and improve stronger communities working in Leeds. Linked to this, the Scrutiny Board supports the work being undertaken with the Third Sector Partnership to better co-ordinate on agendas and to start looking at delivery structures to improve working with communities in Leeds, with a view to developing a 'best city for communities' framework. However, the Scrutiny Board believes that the composition and strands of work undertaken by the supporting partnerships also need to reflect this shift in focus.

### **Recommendation 4**

**That the Stronger Communities Partnership ensures that the composition and strands of work undertaken by the supporting partnerships are also reflective of the move towards developing a 'best city for communities' framework to improve stronger communities working in Leeds.**

### Areas of significant improvement

17. The Leeds Burglary Taskforce brings together key partners from the city's crime reduction and prevention agencies into one focused team to effectively tackle burglary. The team also work with young people who are at risk of becoming burglary offenders, those leaving prison after being convicted of a burglary offence and with communities vulnerable to burglary.
18. The Scrutiny Board acknowledges that before the start of the Burglary Reduction Programme, Leeds had the highest rate of recorded burglaries compared with other similar cities. In 2012/13 there were 5,305 recorded domestic burglaries in Leeds; down 30.8% when compared with the previous year and equivalent to 2357 fewer victims. In 2012 the social and economic cost to Leeds in relation to burglary was equivalent to £22.1m compared with £33.3m in 2011; around £11.2m reduction in cost.
19. Leeds now has lower rates of offences than both Manchester and Sheffield. Work during the year has also progressed to further improve burglary levels through the introduction of predictive mapping and partnership responses.
20. The Scrutiny Board also acknowledges that, since April 2011, Leeds has been operating a multi-agency approach to specifically tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in localities. This partnership approach also provides a co-ordinated and improved level of response and support to victims. The Scrutiny Board welcomes the significant progress made in tackling ASB and recognises that this multi-agency approach has been instrumental in achieving this progress. As such, the Leeds ASB Team is recognised regionally and nationally as a model of good practice.

### Working jointly with other Strategic Partnership Boards

21. The Scrutiny Board was pleased to note that as well as focusing on a few areas of work that join up the spectrum of Safer and Stronger Communities priorities, the Partnership Board is also proactive in working jointly with other Partnership Boards on priority programmes. Particular examples shared with the Scrutiny Board related to the priority work around implementing restorative practices across Children's Services; the joint working approach being undertaken through the Families First Leeds programme; and the Partnership's involvement in the Leeds Alcohol Management Partnership to reduce the harm and negative impacts of alcohol in Leeds.

### Working closely with the Scrutiny Board

22. The Scrutiny Board has already developed a close working relationship with the Chair of the Partnership Board in his capacity as the Council's portfolio holder for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services. However, the Scrutiny Board was also pleased to learn from the Vice Chair that the work undertaken by Scrutiny is often communicated back to the Partnership Board. Particular reference was made to the in-depth inquiry undertaken by Scrutiny around fuel poverty, which acknowledged the complexity and cross-cutting nature of this problem. The Scrutiny Board had also cited positive examples of joint working between the Council and its key partners in exploring and delivering programmes aimed at addressing fuel poverty.
23. It was also acknowledged that the Chair of the Scrutiny Board attends the Partnership Board meetings, which has proved very beneficial in terms of establishing a close working relationship between the two Boards.

24. The Scrutiny Board has also assisted the Partnership in undertaking specific pieces of work. In preparation for the introduction of an elected West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, the Scrutiny Board was asked to provide support to the Safer Leeds Executive as it developed a Leeds Community Safety Business Plan outlining the city's priorities in relation to policing and crime reduction. The Scrutiny Board had undertaken this piece of work during August 2012 and the Business Plan was approved by the Safer Leeds Executive in September 2012.
25. The Scrutiny Board is keen to maintain this close working relationship in the future.

#### Leeds Poverty Challenge

26. Particular focus was given to the Leeds Poverty Challenge, which was an initiative put forward by the Partnership Board as a key response to joining up action and planning on welfare reform.
27. Based on the successful work of the Scottish Poverty Truth Commission, the Scrutiny Board particularly welcomes the objective of the Leeds Poverty Challenge to seek to get under some of the pervasive aspects of poverty in the city and work out how we can better create solutions by co-producing action with people most directly concerned.
28. The Scrutiny Board noted that Phase 1 of the Challenge has now begun to recruit up to 30 people directly experiencing poverty in Leeds who will meet together with some support over the next few months to develop their ability to express and articulate their own experience of poverty, as well as to begin to explore their own views on how to effectively tackle poverty long term. Board Members were particularly pleased to note that Elected Members would be contacted directly to recommend any potential representatives to get involved in the Challenge.
29. The Scrutiny Board emphasised the need to produce workable and sustainable solutions and is pleased to note that the second phase will be about moving immediately to action. The Scrutiny Board is very keen to be kept informed of progress with this particular initiative but also recommends that all Elected Members are kept informed of progress too.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**That the Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board ensures that all Elected Members are kept informed of progress relating to the Leeds Poverty Challenge.**

#### Other general observations

- Governance and accountability arrangements of the Strategic Partnerships

30. The Scrutiny Board noted that following a review of partnership arrangements in December 2012, it was concluded that the Leeds Initiative Board should be replaced by a wider Best City Leadership Network; this would involve more stakeholders in less frequent meetings focusing on the big 'State of the city' issues which face the city. It was acknowledged that the 5 strategic partnership boards would not be changed but would be managed in future by the relevant directorates. However, the Scrutiny Board felt that further clarity is still needed as to how the Partnerships will be held to account in conjunction with the critical friend role of scrutiny. Once confirmed, such

accountability arrangements should be reflected within the terms of reference for the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board and other Partnership Boards.

### **Recommendation 6**

**That once confirmed, the accountability arrangements in place for the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board are set out clearly in the Partnership's terms of reference.**

- Role of the Third Sector Partnership

31. Previously, it was considered appropriate for the Third Sector Partnership to report directly into the Leeds Initiative Board in recognition that the involvement of the third sector needed to be mainstreamed across all of the Strategic Partnerships. As such, the Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board was also required to act as a critical friend to the Third Sector Partnership. It was therefore recognised that further clarification is needed in terms of how this Partnership will continue to inter-relate with the Strategic Partnerships and also link with Scrutiny now that the Leeds Initiative Board no longer exists.

- Involvement of partners in decision-making

32. The Scrutiny Board emphasised the need to ensure that the views of external partners are reflected in any future changes made to the partnership arrangements as should decisions should be taken bilaterally.

### **Conclusion**

33. The Scrutiny Board would like to thank the members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board for their positive participation in this review. In conclusion, the Scrutiny Board agrees that the Partnership Board's initial year has been productive, but that there is also further work to be done.

34. In relation to the specific areas set out in the terms of reference for this piece of scrutiny inquiry work, the Scrutiny Board would like to reiterate some of the key points set out in its report.

#### What contribution the Partnership Board is making to tackle poverty and inequality, and the progress being made against this.

35. It is evident that the development of the Leeds Poverty Challenge will have a significant impact on the city's ability to understand and address the factors associated with poverty. The Scrutiny Board emphasised the need to produce workable and sustainable solutions and is very keen to be kept informed of progress with this particular initiative.

36. Linked to the work undertaken by Scrutiny around fuel poverty, the Scrutiny Board also acknowledges the commitment of staff within Environment and Neighbourhoods in providing fuel poverty training for many teams and organisations and working closely with other partners on various projects to provide vulnerable residents with both income maximisation and fuel poverty advice.

### How successfully the Board's partnership arrangements are working

37. It is clear that the Partnership Board has a broad remit across community safety, community capacity, community relations, street cleaning and parks and green spaces. As such, recognition was also given to the work undertaken by its two major supporting partnerships (Safer Leeds Executive and Stronger Communities Partnership) and the other supporting partnerships that are working on specific work-streams, such as the Leeds Migration Partnership.
38. Recommendations have been made by the Scrutiny Board to pursue the development of more partner involvement in delivering the city's cleaner-greener priorities and to also ensure more involvement of communities and the third sector within the cleaner-greener and the Safer Leeds agendas.
39. A recommendation has also been made for the Partnership to undertake work which underpins the Council's locality working design principles and therefore considers the needs of particular localities as well as maintaining a strategic overview citywide.
40. The Scrutiny Board supports the work being undertaken to look at delivery structures to improve working with communities in Leeds and develop a 'best city for communities' framework. However, linked to this, the Scrutiny Board has recommended that the composition and strands of work undertaken by the supporting partnerships also reflect this shift in focus.

### To what extent are significant benefits being seen from partnership working? How has partnership working ensured increased pace of change to address the issue in hand?

41. It is clear that a major strength of the Partnership Board has been its ability to bring together a range of partners within the public and voluntary and community sectors, including Elected Members, to explore opportunities for collaborative working in addressing a whole variety of issues.
42. The success of such collaborative working is particularly evident in relation to the city's priorities for tackling burglary and anti-social behaviour and has led to significant performance improvements.
43. In moving forward, the Scrutiny Board believes that by embedding the locality working design principles into the future work of the Partnership Board, this also has the potential to achieve further significant benefits in the future.
44. The Scrutiny Board is also keen to maintain a close working relationship with all relevant partners in delivering the city's safer and stronger communities priorities.

May 2013.