

CABINET
21 December 2021

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: DE-COMMISSION OF THE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

REPORT OF: *Policy and Communities Manager*

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member for Community Engagement

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COUNCIL

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks to review one of the Council's current engagement structures – the non statutory Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which is currently known as the North Hertfordshire Partnership.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That Cabinet support and approve the dissolution of the LSP for the reasons set out in this report.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 North Hertfordshire Council widely engages with statutory and voluntary and community organisations in numerous ways. Much has changed since the establishment of the LSP in 2001. Due to a range of factors: the emergence of new thematic partnerships and networks, the complete allocation of the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) and the reduced attendance and engagement of external partners at the Partnership meeting, consideration must be made to dissolving the LSP.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 To continue to arrange biannual meetings of the LSP with reduced partnership involvement.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 The Executive Member and Deputy for Community Engagement have been briefed on the relevant matter in this report. Officers have sought the comments from the listed partners in regard to the proposed dissolution of the LSP. No comments were received during the consultation period from any of the external LSP partners.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 30 April 2021.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Cabinet approved the establishment of an LSP on the 18 December 2001 in accordance with guidance issued under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000. LSPs comprised of non-statutory public, private and voluntary and community sector organisations. Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 (repealed in 2015) required all local authorities to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for promoting or improving the economic, social, and environmental well-being of their area. In the preparation of this strategy, authorities were required to consult with other partners and organisations through the structure of an LSP to develop the SCS. Central Government provided no prescription about its membership, or terms of governance. The Council adopted an Executive and Board structure to consult with over 50 partners organisations to produce the Strategy. As LSPs were unincorporated entities, the responsibility for appropriate spend of the Central Government Performance Reward Grant (PRG) remained with the local authority on the LSP's behalf. The LSP made recommendations for project funding and Cabinet made the final approval to release the funding.
- 7.2 The structure of the LSP has been continually reviewed from 2011 to 2019. These changes to the partnership reflected the complete allocation of Central Government funding (Performance Reward Grant), National Indicator Sets, the removal of, and a general reduction in partnership resource to attend. The Partnership evolved into a single partnership arrangement (originally the LSP agreed a two-tiered management structure with an Executive Group and General Partnership Board) with a more focussed membership and sought to provide information sharing and networking opportunities.
- 7.3 As of 2019, the LSP membership included thirteen partners: - North Hertfordshire District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, North Hertfordshire College, North Hertfordshire Centre for Voluntary Services, Hertfordshire Constabulary, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, North Hertfordshire Minority Ethnic Forum, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, settle, Citizens Advice Bureau and the East and North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Duty to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)

- 8.1 As indicated above, the duty to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy was repealed (under Section 100 of the Deregulation Act 2015). This repeal of Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 (the duty for local authorities to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy) was made as part of the Localism Agenda and gave authorities the freedom to decide whether or not a Sustainable Community Strategy was needed for their area. With this change, the LSP moved away from the SCS to a set of 3 aspirations (1. To support individuals and businesses to develop and grow by provision of training and skills, 2. To support 'civic engagement' and 3. To play its part in the global effort to avoid climate change) to guide the activity of the LSP. There is no statutory requirement to have such a partnership or develop a SCS, which was one of the primary functions of the LSP.

LAA1 Performance Reward Grant

- 8.2 The first round of the Local Area Agreement (LAA1) between Hertfordshire and central government ran between June 2006 and 31st March 2009. In March 2010, the Local Area Agreement Performance Reward Grant Fund was allocated to Hertfordshire County Council. As noted by Cabinet on the 30 March 2010, 'half the money earned would go to the County LSP to reflect their progress against countywide targets... and that the other half would be divided equally among the District LSPs for them to allocate according to agreed local priorities'.¹
- 8.3 The LSP was the vehicle for the allocation of the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) from 2008 to 2014 for North Hertfordshire. The total funds of £434,413.74 was intended to advance the local Sustainable Community Strategy, and North Herts as the 'place'. The final allocation of the Performance Reward Grant award was made in December 2015. The LSP's function of recommending projects ceased at this time.

Partnership working

- 8.4 In 2019, the consensus amongst attendees was that the LSP provided an opportunity to network and stimulated discussion between partners. However, the governance arrangements, administration, and selection of topic themes of the partnership was solely carried out by NHC officers and this was resource intensive. It is also noted that attendance at LSP meetings, since the complete allocation of the Performance Reward Grant, had dropped considerably. Of the thirteen listed partners, there was regular attendance from only a small group. This may be attributed to a lack of partner resource or the benefits of attending the LSP were no longer clear to partners.
- 8.5 Other thematic partnerships exist across the district and continue to emerge for partners to engage across the district and county. For example, the Public Health Board, the Health and Wellbeing Partnership and NHDC Healthy Hub address health and wellbeing matters; the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), and Herts Waste Aware Partnership, (with NHC officers contributing to the partnership and leading the Biodiversity sub group for HCCSP) are in place to assess environmental matters; the Hertfordshire Infrastructure Planning Partnership, the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership look to address economic and planning issues. There are also a number of Strategic County Co-ordinating Cells that interact with the district councils.
- 8.6 The Council have also set up a number of Cabinet Panels to engage with public and a number of voluntary sector networks across the district and county. These all provide ample space for collaboration between organisations to work together to achieve clear outcomes and deliver change. The aspirations of the LSP are covered by these networks and partnerships.

¹ March Cabinet 2010 [https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201003301930/Agenda/\\$att635.doc.pdf](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201003301930/Agenda/$att635.doc.pdf)

- 8.7 Partnership working remains a key theme for NHC. We continue to work together with a wide number of organisations and stakeholders across all sectors. For the reasons set out above, it is considered on balance, that the LSP duplicates a number of other structures already in place, does not work in its current format and should be dissolved. This would allow all partners to focus their resources to engaging at the most appropriate levels to ensure strong partnerships.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Section 5 of the Constitution sets the function of Cabinet. Under the terms of reference section 5.6.24 endorses Cabinet 'to promote and develop external partnerships to meet strategic objectives and under section 5.6.26 'to confer with other local authorities, government departments statutory bodies, voluntary bodies, the police, or other external agencies in order to discharge the responsibilities vested in the Cabinet.
- 9.2. Under section 14.6.8(b)(iii) 4 of the Constitution, the Executive Member for Community Engagement is the lead Member for partnerships and liaisons with external agencies.
- 9.3. As already set out above, there is no legal requirement to have an LSP.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no specific revenue or capital implications or state arising from this report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from the changes highlighted in the report. The recommendations seek to make best use of the opportunities which the council engages with other partner organisations, and reduce duplication.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. There are no equalities implications attached to the recommendation of this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The administration of the LSP is currently carried out by the Policy Team. The disbanding of the LSP will allow the team to support other partnerships and networks throughout the district and county.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None.