



Tending local strategic partnership

local strategic partnership peer challenge

February 2008

contents

executive summary	3
background to the peer challenge	5
context	6
the findings of the peer challenge	7
recommendations	16

executive summary

Tendring Local Strategic Partnership is on the cusp of becoming truly productive, it has forged many of the relationships needed between its partnerships and has a real opportunity to capitalise on them. But it needs to deliver on its promises and to be prepared to be more radical in its vision, provide clearer direction and to build robust performance management systems.

This review has in many ways been undertaken at a timely point in the development of the Tendring Local Strategic Partnership. It has enabled the partnership to take stock of its progress as a partnership, its position in relation to the Essex Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement targets, as well as reflecting on its sustainable community strategy (SCS)

The partnership is delivering tangible outcomes for local people in areas like crime reduction, which is underpinned by clear, effective and inclusive leadership. The overwhelming view of the team was that the partnership has made considerable progress and has concentrated attention on establishing improved clarity and stability.

There is a strong commitment to partnership working amongst the majority of individual members. The partnership has begun to demonstrate some of the leadership required to make it effective and has made a commitment to engaging local people more effectively and drawing them into shaping local services. These are all significant core strengths.

However, delivering the SCS will be extremely challenging. It will be critical that the partners gain the real "buy in" and commitment of local people and organisations to the vision, particularly the business sector; and that the vision is fully shared by all partners. Part of this will entail defining and communicating what this will mean in practical terms making sure the structure of the partnership is fit to deliver and that the critical role of true community engagement is made more explicit in the SCP.

Leadership is the engine which will drive the delivery of the SCS. Whilst partnership leadership is currently effective, the partnership needs to ensure that all its partners' views are commensurate; any lack of strategic guidance will undermine the future of the SCS. In particular there needs to be a greater demonstration of direction to the theme boards, to build upon their significant role in of the partnership. We would strongly suggest that the strengthened mechanism that underpins the work of the Board in the Lead Partners Group is built upon to further develop the co-ordinated approach currently being demonstrated.

The partnership has significant opportunities to share resources, pool budgets and jointly commission services. Such development has the potential for adding greater value to partners working together and will need to be extended if the partners are to deliver their bold ambitions.

Key challenges remain around delivering targets and outcomes particularly around important issues such as economic and social regeneration in areas such as Jaywick. To support the sharper focus on delivery in priority areas the partnership needs to continue to improve its approach to performance management, including the development of the partnership performance management system and making better use of performance information. This will naturally evolve as LAA2 ensures the reduced requirement for reporting on the current wide range of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs).

The partnership is performing well, and has developed a strong collaborative culture, but in order to take it to the next level and ensure it will be able to deliver its SCS and vision the peer challenge has identified the following key recommendations for the partnership:

- Be prepared to develop a more radical Vision, particularly focusing on developing Jaywick, underpinning this with a 'can do' attitude
- Develop a more robust performance management system to include smart targets, milestones and more challenge and integration of LAA targets
- Develop stronger relationships with the Business Community
- Ensure Theme Groups are given clear direction
- Ensure an effective communications conduit is established between the LSP Board and the Theme Groups
- Take opportunity afforded by the current LAA/LSP Theme year of the Beacons Scheme to further develop your LSP by benchmarking the best practice which will be disseminated over the coming year

Each of these recommendations is supported by a more detailed series of findings summarised in this report. The report also addresses secondary issues that the partnership may also wish to consider.

background to the peer challenge

1. The LSP peer challenge has been jointly developed by Warwick Business School, the Improvement & Development Agency and SOLACE Enterprises as a 'critical friend' challenge by peers against a specially constructed benchmark of an ideal local strategic partnership. The benchmark has been developed to examine a range of key issues in relation to how local strategic partnerships operate and can be used to track improvement. The benchmark focuses on vision, strategy, leadership, relationships, performance management, achievement, impact and learning.
2. The peer challenge is not an inspection, rather it offers a supportive approach, undertaken by friends, albeit 'critical friends', and its intention is to help the partnership identify its current strengths as well as areas for improvement. The peers were invited by the Tendring Local Strategic Partnership to challenge the district's approach to the LSP and it is therefore important to understand that this is a peer challenge of all the partners, not simply the local authority.
3. The Tendring peer challenge was facilitated by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), and the challenge team consisted of:
 - Cllr Keith Ross Leader, West Somerset District Council
 - Janet Blann; Chief Executive, Test Valley CVS
 - Superintendent Dick Auger, Aylesbury Local Area Commander, Thames Valley Police
 - Kirsty Cole, Strategic Director, Newark & West Sherwood District Council
 - Tom Herbert, Principal Consultant, IDeA
4. The programme for the on-site phase of the challenge was organised in advance and included a variety of activities designed to enable members of the team to meet and talk to a spectrum of partners. Examples of activities the team undertook are:
 - Discussions with members of the Tendring Local Strategic Partnership
 - Discussions with the political leadership and senior management of the council
 - Focus Groups with local people and officers of Tendring District Council
 - Discussions with the Partnership chair
 - Discussions with representatives of Government Office and Essex County Council
 - Review of a wide range of supporting documentation including the partnership's own self-assessment

The team was appreciative of the support provided by the council and its partners and would like to thank everybody they met during the process for their time and contributions. The team was particularly appreciative of the way in which Kate Mann organised logistical support in the build up to and during the team's visit. The welcome we received reflected the generally enthusiastic approach to the future from everyone associated with the District's journey into the future.

context

5. The role of partnership working in local authorities has, in recent years, taken on an increasingly important role. At a national level, Government has been keen to drive the partnership agenda and this can partly be seen in the roll out of Local Area Agreements, revisions to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework in 2005 and proposed changes to partnership working outlined in the recent Local Government White Paper.
6. Tendring is located in the East of England and is a district of notable contrasts. It covers 33,740 hectares and has 60km of coastline, which equates to around 75% of Tendring's borders. Significantly 19km of its coastline is managed using its permissive coast protection powers. There are three major roads serving Tendring, but some areas, such as St. Osyth and Brightlingsea, are dependent upon a single road.
7. The community make up of the district is complex, with a combination of coastal towns, together with many inland villages. This general picture incorporates both areas of acute urban deprivation and isolated rural communities, where 1 in 7 people live in deprived areas, mainly Jaywick but also small parts of Clacton and Harwich. However there is better than average local authority housing and a high number of elderly residents are cared for in their own homes.
8. The overall population is almost 150,000; with the highest proportion of older people and those with disabilities in the East of England. The unemployment rate, 2.7%, although being around the UK average, is far higher than the Essex average of 1.7%. Employment in the service sector in recent years, but this is mainly seasonal. The majority of employers in the area are from the small business sector and this also includes employers from the chemical, clothing, paper and paper products industries.
9. The Tendring Local Strategic Partnership (TLSP) was established in 1998, following a meeting of key public sector organisations, and was expanded over the coming months to include partners from the voluntary and business sectors. The resulting work produced the first Community Plan, which was launched in 2000. This has been subsequently followed up by the Community Strategy in 2003 and the Sustainable Community Strategy in 2007.
10. In 2006 the LSP held a stakeholders meeting to discuss the future operations of the partnership. This resulted in the LSP being re-structured; there is now an Executive Board of key partners who take the key strategic decisions and determine the objectives and priorities. This is supported by six thematic groups. Four of which are chaired by members of the LSP Board, whose role is to translate the objectives into deliverable targets and advise the executive board on the approaches needed to deliver these.

the findings of the peer challenge

achievement and impact

strengths	areas for future improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved a real step change in the development of the LSP • Moved from talking shop to delivery mode • Massive internal personal investment • Sense of Partnership really starting to address Community Needs • Community Engagement • Active engagement in setting LAA Targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need to ensure internal investment is aligned to parallel and sustainable regeneration, ▪ Ensure raise visibility of LSP within partner organisations

11. Tendring has developed a solid commitment and approach to district-wide partnership working. The partnership is held in high regard by Essex County Council. There is a strong sense of community pride in Tendring evidenced by feedback on the existing SCP and also experienced directly by the peer review team.
12. The review team were made aware of the advances made by the partnership, previously holding a reputation as being a “talking shop” which found “talking the game plan stronger than delivering the results on the front line”. Tendring LSP has really begun to establish itself, growing in strength and focus and is now capable of moving solidly into delivery mode, especially if the partners develop approaches to build the priorities into their day-to-day roles.
13. The LSP is increasingly being seen as the key mechanism for jointly agreeing a vision for the district as well as, planning and jointly delivering services. This is being expressed in the SCS as well as by partners, and is evidenced by massive personal investment of several partners, including the council, health, police and voluntary sector partners
14. Discussions with members of the community indicate that the impact of the partnership is being felt, although the residents who attended the focus group spoke highly of many initiatives which clearly had the LSP stamp on them, including improvements in community safety, with residents speaking of knowing their community police officers by name and the sense of security they felt.
15. The strong sense of engagement expressed by these members came through during the focus group, they were all committed to the area, in particularly to where they each lived, and clearly were prepared to be actively involved in their community. They felt they had been provided ample opportunities to be engaged with the provision of public consultations and meetings.
16. However during these discussions, members of the public expressed strong concerns about the public transport infrastructure, particularly the provision of bus services in the area, and parking restrictions in key shopping areas and health provision for an aging population. These concerns were compounded by wheelchair users in the group, who felt they were disadvantaged by the service. The LSP may wish to consider how it may

use its influence to support the development of the public transport infrastructure, especially to the more remote villages in its area.

17. The interview with the county council representatives indicated that the LSP is both held in high regard by the county council for its positive and proactive approach in working with them and that Tendring LSP had played an active and positive role in the development and setting of the LAA2 targets.
18. Tendring LSP has identified the potential range of opportunities available to bid for funding, and would be strongly encouraged to do so. The relationships that the partners have built between them could be capitalised upon to develop their internal funding mechanisms in a way that makes the pooling of resources viable. These could be aligned across parallel and sustainable regeneration projects, and help to ensure that additional funding streams are utilised far more effectively and with a potentially greater impact.
19. An area that the partnership could address and resolve quickly is the visibility of the LSP within the partner organisations. Discussions with members of the voluntary community suggest that this is tackled very effectively there. Those the review team spoke to told of the feedback mechanisms instilled by their representative on the partnership ensured that they were kept up-to-date with the progress made by the LSP. The review team spoke to staff members and theme group members from across the other partners and it was felt that the LSP had a low visibility in those organisations. Although the impact was starting to filter through to front line staff, awareness of the LSP and what it was doing was less clearly understood.

vision and strategy

strengths	areas for future improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Vision has been agreed • The Sustainable Community Strategy have been agreed and produced • Tendring LSP has become more focused and strategic • Hunger amongst Theme Groups to be more radical and visionary in the direction Tendring could adopt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set own stamp on Vision, develop your own direction, drive and passion • Tapping into funding streams • Consider how can stop Jaywick being “a graveyard of good intentions”

20. The new SCS, incorporating a clear and discernable Vision, was developed in recognition of the importance neighbourhood management to tackle the regeneration of deprived areas.. The plan begins to take a long-term view to deal with large-scale multi agency problems. This now needs to be grounded in firm plans able to be translated into decisive actions. The partnership embarked on a wide-ranging consultation process in Jaywick in 2003. This started to shape the district’s vision and was further developed by public consultations in Clacton and other areas. The outcomes from community consultation have shaped the SCS, and there are further plans for reviewing and refreshing the current plan.
21. There is evidence that the SCS reflects local priorities but the evidence base (demographics, indices of deprivation, health inequalities) that many partners are aware of could be more clearly presented in the document. The document could also highlight more explicitly how the community engagement (which was admirably extensive) fed directly into the Plan, Tendring should be proud of its engagement processes and these should be reflected in its documentation.
22. The SCS, minutes of Executive Board meetings and the observation of a partnership board meeting indicated the LSP is ensuring its focus is firmly on strategic priorities, the link to implementing these priorities has been delegated to the theme boards. This also supports the premise that one of the key strengths of Tendring LSP is its co-ordinating role that ensures actions to support this can be delivered to the community.
23. Although Tendring LSP has developed its vision, feedback from various stakeholders interviewed by the team indicated that they felt the vision appeared to have been evolved from other authorities’ visions. Tendring is in a strong position to set its develop its own vision, one that is dynamic and inspires drive and passion. There is a hunger from theme board members to be more radical and to develop a far more visionary strategy; the review team believes that the LSP has developed its processes to be able to support this.
24. Tendring has identified the opportunities afforded to it by the changes in funding arrangements including Area Based Grants and the availability of funding from a wide range of sources. The LSP should pursue these opportunities with more vigour.
25. Jaywick has been recognised by Tendring as an area with multiple and complex social and economic issues. It has been identified as a key regeneration project area, and has

had numerous strategies, projects and resources dedicated to resolving those issues. Members of the LSP were concerned that Jaywick has been considered an area whose issues are so complex that they fear some parties believe these are unlikely to be resolvable regardless of the resources ploughed into it. One expression used which captured this fears was the concern that "Jaywick would become a graveyard of good intentions".

- 26 The review team believed that Jaywick, and its need for a clear considered, multi-agency strategy to identify effective regeneration is one which the LSP would find challenging . A consistent commitment to resolving the issues needs to be clearly demonstrated across the LSP to ensure the confidence and morale of staff working on those issues is maintained.

leadership and relationships

strengths	areas for future improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally very positive relationships between partners • Strong partnership working developed at operational level • Real focus on action and on cusp of achieving openness and honesty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of inequality in the representation on the LSP Board by the Theme Groups • Need to engage with the business community more positively • Put into place arrangements for an effective dialogue with GO East • Consider how to engage the views of young people in LSP more effectively

27. There is evidence that the LSP is well-led, with commitment and trust between the majority of partners and amongst local people. The partnership is beginning to shape a longer-term vision to progress complex and challenging agendas. Within the partnership consensus decision-making is common and is not hampered by 'politics', with partners and elected members enjoying equal importance in decision-making. Overall, partnership working is underpinned by strong personal relationships and a spirit of willing co-operation.
28. This positive relationship has extended to the operational level and the team were made aware of several examples of how this works in day-to-day practice. Staff interviewed spoke of their relationships with their peers in other agencies in the partnership and how those connections have helped them to carry out their daily tasks more effectively.
29. There is evidence that the Voluntary Sector representative and other partners demonstrate strong leadership and advocacy on the issues the SCS is seeking to address and Tendring District Council (TDC) do so in an understated way. Councillors are actively engaged in a wide range of community based partnerships supported from the highest political level.
30. The size and structure of the LSP Executive Board has enabled it to be focused on key strategic issues. The meeting which the review team observed was open, frank and generated a wide ranging debate on the issues, which were then focused on actions. An observation by the team was that the board did appear to be council centric, with the numbers of attendees from the council giving that impression, particularly as the partnership appears to be beginning to achieve real openness and honesty amongst its partners.
31. The Chair is putting processes in place to ensure effective and constructive challenge is encouraged and fostered between the partners – this could be extended by ensuring the Theme Boards are more explicitly held accountable for delivering their priorities.
32. There is a shared commitment to the SCS priorities that have been strongly demonstrated by TDC, Health, Essex Police, Essex County Council (ECC) and the Voluntary Sector. Where this commitment appears to be less well defined is with the business sector. The business sector will need to play a key role in the regeneration strategy and their commitment will need to be gained. The LSP may wish to consider if the current partnership needs to be refreshed to develop those relationships and gain

the commitment of the business sector.

- 33 There is strong support provided to the LSP by TDC. Priorities are well defined, but there was a feeling that whilst public bodies cascade information this may be less forthcoming from the private sector. The team was not able to fully evidence this aspect.
- 34 The theme groups are a critical element in the structure of the LSP, providing the link between strategy and implementation. However the leadership of these groups is inconsistent and they do not appear to receive as strong a direction as they may need from the Executive Board to enable them to operate as effectively as they appear capable of. This has also led to a sense of inequality amongst the theme board members, where some have leadership from Executive Board members, and thus a direct link into the Executive Board, which others feel they do not share. This may need to be addressed by looking at how the theme groups are led and how they feed into the Executive Board to offer a more consistent approach.
- 35 The Review Team developed a view, based on the evidence provided, that the dialogue between the LSP and Government Office East of England (GO EAST) could be strengthened. Given the priority on regeneration issues, especially in Jaywick, a strong relationship with GO East will provide much needed support for Tending in meeting these complex challenges..
- 36 During our visit the review team was advised that the views of young people may not be as effectively sought and built into the strategic plans as effectively as they could be. The LSP clearly understands the issues of an aging population, it should consider utilising the best practices they have demonstrated in community engagement to extending this to more creative approaches to attract the views of young people.

governance and performance

strengths	areas for future improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An emerging performance management focus including the implementing of risk assessments on deliverability of objectives • Theme Groups working to align objectives through their own organisations • Use of efficiency tests for VS funding • Theme leads have autonomy • Have funded partnership support in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance management system, monitoring of theme groups needs to be more effective, with new format for reporting bedded down and theme groups held to account for delivery of objectives • Develop the Theme Groups consistently, e.g. meetings etc. and ensure they are embedded into the structure • Provide clear direction to Theme Groups

- 37 The overall LSP has clear governance arrangements (although this does not appear to be consistently understood across all theme groups, but this may be more through lack of direction). It has demonstrated a well established approach to managing the delivery of its objectives – this includes robust use of consultation, planning, implementation and review of delivery. The theme groups have wide ranging representation from partners in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors and there appears to be a real consensus in terms of an approach to decision-making across many of the theme boards. The LSP has evidently put into place processes and procedures to engage appropriate partners from across the district, at the right level to ensure accountability.
- 38 There is evidence of a performance management system being in place. The LSP recognises that this needs adapting to fully meet its needs and is establishing a more comprehensive and solid performance management system. It will be important to ensure that this is aligned with other performance frameworks for the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA. The LSP recognises that these performance system and indicators will need to adequately relate to a full range of targets, including quality of life across the whole of the district. These have been underpinned by the risk assessments carried out by the LSP on the implementation of the priorities.
- 39 Interviews with theme group members and staff indicate that the LSP's strategic priorities are being aligned with the priorities of the main partnership organisations, including the Voluntary Sector organisations. This is also supported by the format of the efficiency tests Tendring DC utilises as part of its voluntary sector funding stream arrangements.
- 40 The theme groups have been given the autonomy to develop implementation plans, and this trust in them is both welcomed and inspiring. Those members of theme groups the review team spoke to were keen to share their work and were clearly proud of their achievements. They would like this recognised by the executive board, which they felt, although positive about their work, could put more emphasis on the celebration of achievements.

- 41 With this autonomy though, the review team felt that the LSP board needs to provide clearer direction and ensure that the parameters the theme groups work to are explicit. Discussions with theme group members suggests that their enthusiasm for their role is leading to activities being developed to support their research, which may be better built into more overarching studies carried out by the partnership organisations.
- 42 The review team were also pleased to note that funded support for the LSP is now in place; early indications of the support provided to the review team suggest that this will provide for effective support to the LSP as it develops.
- 43 The new performance management processes are currently being implemented; although in these early stages theme group members are feeling frustrated and unclear why these changes are taking place to a reporting mechanism which has only recently been implemented itself. The LSP support team may need to ensure these systems are implemented sensitively and time is spent supporting the theme groups in using these systems and understanding why they are necessary.
- 44 There is evidence to indicate the management of the theme group's meetings are inconsistent. This is leading to a sense of disquiet and frustration amongst some theme groups, who are anxious to develop their implementation plans and ensure their priorities are achieved. The review team suggest that the LSP Board and support should address this as a priority; particularly as feedback to the review team suggests that theme groups are not always made accountable for their priorities.

learning and development

strengths	areas for future improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to learn and improve • Tendring LSP is self-aware • Frontline staff have contacts in other agencies and can more effectively refer customers on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work on development of partnership • Develop ways to celebrate achievement, enable Theme Groups to directly report into the LSP Board on regular basis at each meeting

- 45 Several partners expressed openness and willingness to learn and improve, including the positive step of requesting this peer challenge to take place. It is suggested that Tendring LSP consider how they might engage with the activities offered throughout the coming years Beacon Award holders for the LAA and LSP theme..
- 46 In addition to the self-assessment, Tendring LSP carried out a SWOT analysis on itself. When reviewed this proved to be not only accurate, but refreshing in its open, frank and honest appraisal of both the LSPs strengths but also its weaknesses. Discussions with partners strongly suggested that the LSP will be taking steps to address the issues it faces whilst maintaining their strengths.
- 47 Discussions with Tendring Council front line staff indicated that although there were gaps in their knowledge about the LSP and how it operates, what was clear was their enthusiasm for the outcomes. The review team were provided with several examples of where contacts have been made with partner agencies and this has enabled them to deal with their customers far more effectively. Ensuring that not only do they know which agency to refer enquiries to, but also that they can also advise customers of the right person to speak to and can provide customers with their contact details.
- 48 The review team were impressed by the willingness to learn and improve and firmly wishes Tendring LSP success in the development of the partnership, building upon the strengths already demonstrated at this stage of the journey.
- 49 The review team would suggest that Tendring LSP develops approaches to celebrate their successes. Staff expressed concerns that sometimes what they had achieved was not always fully recognised.
- 50 Tendring LSP may also wish to consider how they may enable the theme boards to feed into the LSP Board directly. It is recognised that it would not be an effective use of time for a slot to be made for each board at all meetings, however the LSP Board may find it useful to provide an agenda item which enables one of the theme boards to feedback any key issues it is facing and what it is achieving.

recommendations

49 This review has in many ways been undertaken at a timely point in the development of the Tendring Local Strategic Partnership. It has enabled the partnership to take stock of its progress as a partnership, its position in relation to the Essex Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement targets, as well as reflecting on its community plan. The partnership is starting to perform well. In order to take it to the next level and ensure it will be able to deliver its community plan and strategy the peer challenge has identified the following key recommendations for the partnership:

- Be prepared to develop a more radical Vision, particularly focusing on developing Jaywick, underpinning this with a 'can do' attitude
- Develop a more robust performance management system to include smart targets, milestones and more challenge and integration of LAA targets
- Develop stronger relationships with the Business Community
- Ensure Theme Groups are given clear direction
- Ensure an effective communications conduit is established between the LSP Board and the Theme Groups
- Take opportunity afforded by the current LAA/LSP Theme year of the Beacons Scheme to further develop your LSP by benchmarking the best practice which will be disseminated over the coming year

Tom Herbert
IDeA Review Manager
February 2008