

COUNCIL MEETING – 20 JULY 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. LEWIN-HARRIS – COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

As Taunton Deane's representative on the Regional Assembly, I have been nominated to the Regional Futures Sub Group. The task before this group is to develop an Integrated Regional Strategy against which all other regional and sub regional strategies can be tested.

This is proving an interesting but challenging task. The brief is that the Integrated Regional Strategy should set the tone for how we want the South West to develop over the next 20 years, identifying the key priorities that are important for the region and also be short and concise.

The first draft of the Integrated Regional Strategy has now been produced. Currently it is entitled Just Connect. It identifies five key headline aims for the Region:

- To harness the benefits of population growth and manage the implications of population change
- To enhance our distinctive environments and the quality and diversity of our cultural life
- To enhance our economic prosperity and ensure quality of employment opportunity
- To address deprivation and disadvantage to reduce significant intra-regional inequalities
- To make sure that people are treated fairly and can participate fully in society

Under these will lie a number of 'Crunch Objectives' that require an integrated approach across the Region. The full document can be seen on the Regional Assembly website www.southwest-ra.gov.uk.

The Assembly will debate the draft strategy at the next meeting on 16 July.

TAUNTON DEANE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The LSP met on the 17 June, at the Wellsprings Leisure Centre. The main item on the agenda was to agree a plan for spending the additional income raised by the 90% Council Tax now levied on second home owners in Taunton Deane (the previous levy was 50%). Projects to advance the following shared priorities were discussed:

- Inequalities and the needs of minority and 'hard to reach' groups
- Promoting a stronger economy and tackling the causes of deprivation in particular areas of Taunton Deane

- Developing better ways of sharing information between agencies about local needs and quality of life trends
- Developing safer communities, with a particular emphasis on the night time economy and anti-social behaviour

A multi-agency group would meet to work up project ideas in more detail. These will then be agreed by myself as Chair of the LSP, Penny James (as TDBC's representative on the LSP)) and David Taylor (Somerset County Council).

Further information on the LSP can be found on its website:

www.tauntondeane-lsp.com

ENSURING LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS DELIVER

I recently attended a Conference in London, organised by the New Local Government Network (described as Local Government's Think Tank). The subject was: Ensuring Local Strategic Partnerships Deliver.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is looking for 3 key outcomes from LSP's:

- Improvement of mainstream services through pooling of resources and new ways of working
- Community involvement and community empowerment
- Reduction in inequalities between deprived areas and other areas

There are a great many models of LSP out there. Those in areas where Neighbourhood Renewal Funding is available look very different to those in largely Rural Districts. However, it was clear that there are some tensions that are common to many:

- Between community priorities and core business (which will most likely be driven by government targets).
- Between the different layers of local government, particularly in 2 tier areas. There are significant complexities in aligning regional, county, district and local community strategies.
- Between all the different partnerships operating in the same field (partner fatigue).
- Between Government requirements/suggestions as to what LSP's should take on and the capacity of LSP's to do this

THE FUTURE

- 'New Localism' or 'Giving the LSP's Teeth' was being heavily promoted
- This could mean LSP's would develop into Local Public Service Boards with both appointed and elected members and pooled budgets and staff
- They would plan and deliver on new Local Public Service Agreements or Local Area Agreements
- These would make explicit who will deliver change and how at the local level
- Success would depend on clear new settlement between Whitehall and localities
- Would need a much simplified target regime

- Funding streams would also have to be simplified

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LESSONS FOR TAUNTON DEANE LSP

We need to:

- monitor and report back on progress against the targets in the Community Strategy (we are already working on this)
- look further at areas where pooling resources could bring greater efficiencies/savings to be reinvested.
- Look at ways we can measure if we are “closing the gap” in the disadvantaged areas
- Do more to raise awareness of the LSP amongst a wider audience
- Consider next round of LSPA targets to be agreed by LSP

Councillor Mrs Joanna Lewin-Harris