

North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership - Executive

7 January 2010

Future of the NYSP Partnership

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update the NYSP Executive on responses received from Partnership members to the recent consultation on the review of current Partnership arrangements.
- 1.2 To seek agreement from Executive members on a way forward.

2 Background

- 2.1 The NYSP Executive discussed the current arrangements for the NYSP Partnership at its meeting of 1st October 2009 and subsequently fed in comments to a consultation. The responses from Executive members may be summarised as follows:
- A need to scrap the current arrangements and a level of consensus around giving the Executive the authority to agree the SCS and LAA;
 - A need to ensure that other mechanisms across the NYSP enable effective engagement with elected members and locally-identified partners on the Partnership;
 - Mixed opinions on the idea of replacing the Partnership with a Leaders'/Chairs' Board: many feeling that this simply replaces one structure with another without adding any value; and
 - Recognition of the success of the annual Wider Partnership (WP) event and of the scope for developing this further into a forum for challenge from all partners and/or ensuring better engagement with elected members and others - balanced by the view that the efficacy of this will be limited as this forum has no decision-making powers.
- 2.2 A paper was subsequently circulated to all Partnership members in November 2009 updating them on the early discussion which had taken place and seeking their views on the following four options:
- Option 1: continue with current arrangements;
 - Option 2: seek further improvements to the Partnership meeting arrangements;
 - Option 3: scrap the Partnership meeting, giving the Executive the authority to agree the SCS and LAA;
 - Option 4: scrap the Partnership meeting and replace it with some form of Leaders'/Chairs' Board.
- 2.3 Tied in to Options 3 and 4 was the recognition that change would also need to lead to ensuring that elected members and locally-identified partners (e.g. LSPs and the Third Sector) are engaged on the NYSP via other mechanisms such as the Thematic Partnerships or the Wider Partnership (WP) and that

perhaps communications around the WP and across other parts of the NYSP could be improved.

3 NYSP Partnership member responses

- 3.1 Sixteen responses were received from Partnership members regarding the Partnership review. Following this consultation it is clear that the consensus of opinion is in favour of the wider proposal for change and therefore for scrapping the Partnership in its current format.
- 3.2 However, a number of respondents have similarly expressed concern that this could result in the loss of effective linkages and engagement with elected members, district LSPs and locally-identified organisations. At this point the consensus about how change could therefore be best effected is somewhat more divided.
- 3.3 While several respondents agreed that the power for agreeing the SCS and LAA should be given to the Executive, a slightly higher number felt that the creation of a Leaders'/ Chairs' Board would be a more appropriate solution. Specifically, some respondents felt that any such new grouping should include representation from the Chairs of each of the district LSPs as well as elected members.
- 3.4 Additionally, a couple of respondents welcomed the proposal for mapping current representation on the Thematic Partnerships to identify where there may be gaps and to help resolve the issue of 'disconnection' if/when the Partnership is scrapped.
- 3.5 Other views expressed include:
- "Option 3 or 4 would resolve the immediate problem of ineffectual Partnership meetings, but the greater challenge is making the NYSP and the LAA relevant and giving them a role in transforming community and economy in the current and future environment"; and
 - "If Option 3 [SCS and LAA agreed by the Executive] is adopted then real thought needs to be given to the role of the Executive, however well it is felt it functions currently. It is important that the Executive is seen to be and is felt to be accountable to and by the other partnerships."

4 Going forward

- 4.1 There are effectively now three distinct areas which the Executive will need to give further consideration to going forward:
- 1) agreeing on who will take a decision about the future of the Partnership – and how this is done;
 - 2) if the Partnership is scrapped, what – if anything - will replace it and how will key endorsements be made; and
 - 3) in addition to the above, how can communications be developed across the NYSP more broadly to ensure key links with current Partnership members are maintained.

4.2 Deciding on the future of the Partnership

4.2.1 On the basis of the responses received from both the Executive and Partnership to this consultation, there is consensual agreement that the Partnership should be scrapped in its current form. The Executive will now need to consider:

- a) whether it is able to take a decision to abolish the Partnership itself, based on the responses received; or
- b) whether this decision should be referred back to the Partnership group

4.2.2 Option (a): the Executive decides to abolish the Partnership. As highlighted at 3.1, only 16 responses have been received from Partnership members to this consultation. Whilst just less than a third of Partnership members have responded to the consultation, a clear majority support scrapping the Partnership and the Executive members may feel this is sufficient to enable it to take the decision.

4.2.3 Option (b): the Executive refers the final decision back to the Partnership. The NYSP Partnership is currently scheduled to meet on 11th March 2010. If the Executive felt that in view of the relatively few responses received from Partnership members that the decision on whether to abolish the Partnership should be referred back to this group then this could be considered at their March meeting. However, this carries the disadvantages that there are unlikely to be any other substantive items on that agenda for discussion and this also delays somewhat the process of delivering change if change is needed.

4.3 Structural change / Decision-making

4.3.1 If the Partnership is scrapped then a decision needs to be taken on how future decision-making and endorsement – particularly of the SCS and LAA – is taken forward. Members have been asked to consider two options:

- a) delegating the power to agree the SCS and LAA to the NYSP Executive; or
- b) creating a Leaders'/Chairs' Board.

While the majority of Executive members have favoured delegating the power to agree the SCS and LAA to the NYSP Executive group, there is roughly a balance between those respondents from the Partnership who would favour this and those who would prefer to create a Leaders'/Chairs' Board.

4.3.2 A clear disadvantage to delegating the powers to the Executive is that this would remove all direct elected member involvement on the NYSP and would prevent any 'locally-identified' members such as LSPs from having a direct engagement in decision making.

4.3.3 If a Leaders'/Chairs' Boards is to be created instead then the Executive will need to carefully consider the make-up of this group, its role and purpose. In other authorities, such groups typically comprise the Leaders of the local authorities and Chairs of other key partners (effectively the Leaders/Chairs of the organisations who are represented on the NYSP Executive).

4.3.4 In particular, the Executive would need to consider engagement on the NYSP of the district LSPs. Various respondents to the consultation have argued that LSP Chairs should similarly be included on any Leaders'/Chairs' Board if one is to be created, to ensure that key linkages with LSPs on the NYSP are not lost. This would mean that a Leaders'/Chairs' Board could therefore in theory include the following representatives:

- The Leaders of the eight local authorities;
- The Leaders/Chairs of other NYSP Executive organisations such as the National Park Authorities, Fire and Rescue, Police, NYFVO;
- The Chairs of the seven district LSPs.

Manageability of such a group needs to be a key consideration alongside its role and functions, if it is to effectively replace the Partnership.

4.3.5 A further option would be to give the responsibility for agreeing the SCS and LAA to the Leaders' Board of Local Government North Yorkshire and York (for this purpose excluding the City of York Council); and requiring the NYSP Executive to demonstrate to the Leaders' Board that the consultation process for the SCS and LAA had proactively sought to fully engage the seven district LSPs and strategic public, business and third sector partner organisations. This option would ensure the continued engagement of elected members in decision making and recognise the key role of district LSPs alongside other partners.

4.4 Developing better communications across the NYSP

4.4.1 In addition to inputting on the principle of structural change, the majority of respondents (both Executive and Partnership) have positively reinforced in some form the potential for developing NYSP communication mechanisms and opportunities for better engagement of all NYSP partners. These could include:

- a) developing the Wider Partnership annual event as a means of ensuring better communication on NYSP Executive and Thematic Partnership activity with a wider audience;
- b) developing more frequent and regular communications and updates across the Wider Partnership, for example focussing on reporting back Thematic Partnership activity; and/or
- c) undertaking a mapping exercise of representation on groups such as the Thematic Partnerships to identify where there may be gaps in two-way communication mechanisms, particularly with some of those groups/organisations who would not be part of a Leaders'/Chairs' Board.

4.4.2 Views are sought from the Executive on the above suggestions and any additional proposals for developing better communications across the NYSP more broadly would also be welcomed.

5 **Recommendations**

- 5.1 That the NYSP Executive consider:
- (a) whether members can take a decision on the future of the Partnership or whether this needs to be deferred to the Partnership group;
 - (b) whether the Partnership should be replaced by a Leaders'/Chairs' Board or whether the Executive should take responsibility for agreeing the SCS and LAA; and
 - (c) approaches towards ensuring better and more frequent communications across the NYSP, particularly with those members of the current Partnership who may not be actively engaged through a new structure.

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